

THE MARRIED WOMAN

By C. B. FERNALD

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THE
MARRIED WOMAN
A PLAY IN THREE PARTS
By C. B. FERNALD



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TO MEN AND WOMEN
OF A CERTAIN SENSIBILITY WHICH PERHAPS
MAY RECOGNISE ITSELF HEREIN

*The Past Worshipped the Past ;
The Present Worships the Present ;
But the Future Shall Worship the Future.*

THE MARRIED WOMAN

I

This is the drawing-room of WILLIAM and JANE TEMPLE, appointed in the style of thirty years ago, and somewhat worn. The well-dressed woman of twenty-seven with nicely cut features, who stands peering into the adjoining room through the crack of the door at your right is ALICE—MRS. HENRY MATTHEWSON. The woman of fifty who comes ominously from the hall through the opening directly facing you is JANE TEMPLE.

MRS. TEMPLE. Is she crying about it ?

ALICE [with a shrug]. No !

MRS. TEMPLE. George's one reason for not leaving this house for ever is that he can't find his hat !

[She exhibits an opera hat concealed by a copy of “*The Lady.*”]

ALICE. Mother ! You are hiding George's hat ?

MRS. TEMPLE. Shall we have Sylvia jilt this boy at the church door ? Have him marry some other girl, out of pique, within six weeks, and make us all ridiculous ? Alice, we must get her through the next eighteen hours somehow !

ALICE [*wearily*]. O, mother, if Sylvia does not marry George—she'll marry someone else.

[*They hear someone in the hall.*

MRS. TEMPLE [*eager to be rid of the hat*]. Take it !

ALICE. No ; it's only father.

[WILLIAM TEMPLE *is fifty-five and fatigued.* *He throws himself into an arm-chair, with a sigh, and waves a bill.*

TEMPLE. Fifteen guineas for floral decorations—that's the estimate. [With irony] A mere trifle ! I hope Sylvia will appreciate that we—What's the matter ?

MRS. TEMPLE [*irritably*]. William, it's a crisis ! Sylvia has so behaved to George that he is looking for his hat.

TEMPLE [*sitting up*]. What !

MRS. TEMPLE [*vexed at his inaction*]. William, he may leave this house without his hat !

[TEMPLE *hurries to the door, where he collides with* GEORGE HERBERT. GEORGE *is thirty, of fixed features which do not respond to the geniality* TEMPLE *tries to impose.*

TEMPLE. Hello ! Hello, my boy !

[TEMPLE *slaps him on the back.*

GEORGE [*not meeting TEMPLE's eye*]. I don't see how I possibly could have left my hat here——?

MRS. TEMPLE [*soothingly, concealing the hat*]. No, dear !

TEMPLE. Hat ? Why, it's only nine o'clock.

GEORGE [*after a moment, with a burst*]. Your

daughter says she does not know whether she will marry me to-morrow or not at all !

TEMPLE [*clapping him on the back*]. Now, now—my boy ! If you knew what a boon it is to live with a woman who has the sense of humour !

MRS. TEMPLE [*who always promptly takes these things to herself*]. Hm !

TEMPLE. Why, my boy, if you went away in this fashion, she might *not* marry you to-morrow.

GEORGE [*after a moment*]. Well—she hasn't waited for me to come back.

ALICE. But you sailed out first, didn't you, George ? You can't play your trumps and have 'em too.

GEORGE [*willing to be mollified*]. Well—— [*But the sound of a piano is heard from the next room. The tune is "Good-bye, Dollie, I must leave you!" This angers GEORGE, and he points to the door.*] Considering that in the last year she has three times broken off our engagement—That hat is in this house somewhere !

[*He bolts for the hall, pursued by TEMPLE.*

MRS. TEMPLE [*in a panic*]. George !—William !

TEMPLE [*stopping GEORGE without much difficulty*]. Now, now—my boy, my boy ! Look here—[*points wisely to the other room*] just wait ! Just wait ! [*The piano breaks into Mendelssohn's Wedding March as TEMPLE opens the door.*

Sylvia !

[*After two bars of the Wedding March the music lapses back to "Good-bye, Dollie."*

TEMPLE. Sylvia !

[*The music continues to swing between Dollie and Mendelssohn as HENRY MATTHEWSON enters the room from the hall. He is thirty-five, with a full voice and a large frame. He drily calls GEORGE's attention to the music.*

HENRY. Do you know what that is ? That's Mendelssohn's Funeral March !

[*He sits with his back to the rest, and begins to read a newspaper.*

TEMPLE. Sylvia !!

[*The piano stops, and in a moment we have a picture of SYLVIA in the doorway of the room she is leaving. It is a pleasing picture. At twenty-four Nature has done for SYLVIA all that any woman need desire. There is no approval of her in the united family look ; but there is no resentment in her eyes, nor any anger at GEORGE. In a moment she goes to the chair nearest where he stands.*

TEMPLE [*ingratiating*]. Now, Sylvia, what have you been saying to George ?

SYLVIA [*evenly*]. George knows.

[*ALICE sits in a chair that is back to back with HENRY'S ; all but HENRY look to GEORGE.*

GEORGE [*with bad grace*]. Well—we were sitting there, and I was reading this book to her——

TEMPLE. Manly strength and girlish beauty ; side by side at the fireplace, reading a pretty book.

GEORGE. There wasn't any *fire* in the fireplace.

TEMPLE. But there will be. Think of the number

of such delightful moments there are in store for you !

ALICE [*ironically*]. Yes ! look at Henry and me !

MRS. TEMPLE. Alice ! Sylvia and George are not going to lead each other such a life of perpetual, ridiculous—

HENRY [*over his shoulder*]. It won't be perpetual ! [To GEORGE] Prisoner at the bar—whatever you do have in store for you, never forget that beautiful promise of the marriage service : "Until death us part !"

SYLVIA [*who has discovered where GEORGE's hat is*]. And, George, I warn you that, *if* we are married, *after* we are married, mother may cease to cherish your wearing apparel.

[HENRY chuckles, but GEORGE gathers nothing as to his hat.]

GEORGE. "If" we are married ! And to-morrow every one of my friends will be at the church ! [With a burst] Henry, will you lend me *your* hat ? [HENRY appears to consult the finer type of his newspaper.]

TEMPLE [*playfully*]. Now, now—my boy ! Listen to a man who has weathered nearly thirty years of married life. George—when a woman can put a man in a corner, when she can cannon at him off the ceiling, off the walls, and off the floor, in an avalanche of incrimination—my boy—[he casts a look at MRS. TEMPLE] that man is her husband. And he is making that woman happy.

MRS. TEMPLE. Hm !

[HENRY chuckles.]

TEMPLE. Now, don't you want to make Sylvia happy ?

GEORGE [*sullenly*]. Of course I do, Mr. Temple ; but if I don't *marry* her, how *can* I make her happy ?

ALICE [*with a shrug*]. Dear me—— !

TEMPLE [*waving the bill for flowers*]. You *will* marry her, at noon to-morrow. And the floral decorations in the church—I trust will convey some indication of the regret she leaves behind her. [*He puts down the bill. SYLVIA reads it.*] But whenever Sylvia wants to express herself a little, don't put your *hat* on your head !

HENRY [*chuckles*]. No ! Put it on your ear !

TEMPLE. Merely sit tight, my boy, and [*slyly*] look as if you were listening to her.

MRS. TEMPLE. Hm !

[HENRY *chuckles* ; *she casts a look at him*.]

GEORGE. Well—she is not expressing *anything* at present.

SYLVIA [*mildly*]. I'm only the proposed bride.

TEMPLE [*laughing to help the atmosphere*]. Her humour, my boy. [*Takes up the book.*] Now, Sylvia, you and George were reading this book—“Love Among the Roses,” by Annabel Charmer. A charming book, no doubt. I like the binding. And, Sylvia [*chidingly*] you kept interrupting him—about some totally irrelevant matter !

GEORGE. No, Mr. Temple, Sylvia never does that. But when I had finished reading the last paragraph, then she——

SYLVIA. George, will you please read aloud the last paragraph?

[GEORGE acquiesces with ill grace, and reads badly.

The others listen without edification, save TEMPLE, who nods and smiles.

GEORGE [reads]. "And so, in the little parish church, on a day when the sun glistened on the dew-kissed cowslips, and the birds celestially carolled from the boughs of Brackleigh Wood—and all the villagers were smiling—[HENRY chuckles] they were married. Perhaps it was the most beautiful woman in England who returned from the altar on the arm of Chauncey Montclair. And he was the lord of the manor—the happiest man in the world."

SYLVIA. Go on.

GEORGE [irascibly]. Now, that's just what she said before! How can I go on, when it's the *end*—and she knows it!

SYLVIA. End of what?

GEORGE. *That's* what she said before!

TEMPLE. End of the book, my dear.

MRS. TEMPLE. Of course, George. It's the end of the book, Sylvia!

SYLVIA. Why?

GEORGE. *That's* what she said before!

TEMPLE. "Why?" What's got hold of the girl?

SYLVIA. Isn't it decent to be married?

TEMPLE. Of course it is!

SYLVIA. Isn't it interesting to be married?

ALICE [with irony]. Most!

SYLVIA. Isn't it desirable to be married?

MRS. TEMPLE. Of course it is !

SYLVIA. Then, at the moment when the book comes to what is desirable, decent, and most interesting—why does it suddenly stop ?

GEORGE. Now *that's* what she said before ! And I told her—I kept saying—

SYLVIA. Nothing that answers my question, George. Father—Mother—Alice—Henry—you've all been married. *Why* does the book stop there ?

[*A pause.*]

MRS. TEMPLE [*puzzling*]. Why does the book stop there ?

TEMPLE. Why does the book stop there ? Because—because—a—[*He is at loss*].

ALICE. Why, it stops there because it—because it—[*At loss*].

HENRY. Why, because that's where it—that's where the—a—[*He gets no further*].

SYLVIA. So George kept saying.

[*Another pause.*]

TEMPLE. Why, my dear child, it's this : In a story, in a fiction, no matter how true to life—and that little touch of the villagers smiling makes me certain that this book *is* true to life—still, the one essential to the movement—the existence—of the story, is—conflict ! Now, when that conflict ceases—

SYLVIA. “Ceases” ? Really, if I'm to judge from the married life I see about me, why doesn't this book go on for ever ?

[*A weary pause.*]

GEORGE. Sylvia, you and I *know* that *we* are not going to live a life of conflict !

SYLVIA [*to her mother*]. Didn't father tell you something like that before you were married ?

[MRS. TEMPLE *casts down her eyes*. HENRY *chuckles*.

SYLVIA *turns to ALICE*.

SYLVIA. How about Henry ?

ALICE [*shrugs*]. Henry disclaims any responsibility for what I say he may have said during what he calls his prenuptial delirium.

SYLVIA. George, was it a "prenuptial delirium" in which you banged the book on the table and thumped out of the room—all because you couldn't explain to me something you know nothing about ? Suppose I asked *you* to go with me straight out on an unknown sea. And you said, "Let's get some kind of chart first ; let's consult people who know." And suppose I said, "No ! since the dew is on the cowslips and the organist is on the Wedding March—perhaps taken from the tragedy of Lohengrin—I insist upon shoving off at once !" I think the villagers *would* smile !

TEMPLE. But—but didn't we all put to sea that way ? Where's the spirit of adventure ? [*Appeals to HENRY*.] Where's the glorious self-confidence of youth ?

HENRY. In its bunk, with a bottle of salts !

[*Another weary pause*.]

SYLVIA. But I don't see why you sulk, George. I am not angry with you.

TEMPLE [*seizing the moment*]. Then it's all right !

It's all right ! [Motions the non-disputants to depart.] It's only George that's angry with Sylvia ! It's quite all right ! Come along ! Come on !

MRS. TEMPLE [about to admonish SYLVIA]. I consider your conduct most—

TEMPLE. There's nothing to consider ! Come along, Jane ! [He rushes back and disturbs HENRY.] Come on, come on !

[HENRY wearily rises, and the four depart, ALICE and HENRY choosing different directions in the hall. For a moment SYLVIA contemplates GEORGE.

SYLVIA. Well, let's take up our quarrel where you interrupted it. If I marry you to-morrow—

GEORGE. If you knew how you freeze my marrow when you say "if." You are everything worth having in this world ! I could die for you ! You know you have me in a tight place !

SYLVIA. To-night—perhaps ! But—five years from now—?

GEORGE [taking her hand]. Sylvia ? I can't live without you !

SYLVIA [slowly withdrawing her hand]. Isn't it more important whether you can live *with* me ? You shall never say I took advantage of you. If I marry you to-morrow, it will be in spite of the approval of my entire family. And it's quite to be understood that, though I am supposed to know the whole art of *getting* married, I have been brought up to know nothing about *being* married. Perhaps another girl would try to conceal from you the position in which you stand

to us to-night. My father has never ceased to talk most discretely to me about the size of your inheritance. The only reason you are here at this moment is apparently because mother concealed your hat. Alice and Henry, who are frightfully disappointed with each other, do their best to make *us* marry. If you suspect any danger in anything I've said, it's your duty to yourself and to me—not to marry me to-morrow.

GEORGE. That's what you wanted to tell me ! Now you feel better. If they all want me to marry you, they are all my friends ! I dream of you—day and night ! You *are* the most beautiful woman in all England ! Thank God, I *am* "lord of the manor" ! And the sun *will* shine and the birds *will* sing to-morrow—and I shall be the happiest man in the world !

SYLVIA [*looking at him thoughtfully*]. No, George ; this is what I've been wanting to tell you. These sugary things, that you've fed me with so long that—perhaps I've acquired a taste for them. I once knew a man who tried to make me think such things a sure sign of—well, of a want of grasp of—of what we are threatening to do to-morrow.

GEORGE. Not a man who placed much value on *you*, Sylvy !

SYLVIA. He asked me to be his wife.

GEORGE [*resentfully*]. You never told me that !

SYLVIA. There are things about yourself which I have never asked you. [*She sees ALICE pass through the hall and give them a glance of curiosity.*] You see

[*she waves at hall*] how busy they are with our affair.

GEORGE [*preoccupied*]. Does this explain the last three months ? Are you thinking of *him* ? Are you regretting ?

SYLVIA. If I didn't care for you, don't think you'd be here for a moment to-night. I refused him. He went away to Alaska. In the last five years he has made himself famous—something to do with mining. His name is Dellamy.

GEORGE. Why don't you say his name *was* Dellamy !

SYLVIA. Because he's coming here to-night.

GEORGE. He hasn't any better taste—to-night ?

SYLVIA. He hasn't heard of our plans. He reached England only this morning. You see—I telegraphed to his steamer. [GEORGE *darkens and is silent*. SYLVIA *is angered at his attitude*.] How dare you be jealous of him, after what I have said !

GEORGE. Then why do you ask him here—to-night ?

SYLVIA. Because there's something being concealed from me. Because my memory tells me that he is the one person who can and perhaps will—frankly, fully—tell us *why* the book ends *there*.

GEORGE. This is something new to me ! You want to call in a rejected suitor, to ask him a question which he *can't* but twist into whether perhaps, after all, you don't want him more than

you want me ! By Jove, Sylvia ! how am I to endorse that sort of thing ? [MRS. TEMPLE *passes along the hall, observing them, unseen.*] As your husband—

SYLVIA. George, as I told you before, you are not my husband yet—and if you were—

MRS. TEMPLE [*in alarm at this*]. William ! William ! Henry ! Alice !

[*She hurries into another part of the house.*

GEORGE [*hotly*]. Then what am I ? If I'm anything, I've at least the right to protest against your bringing in a rank outsider to—to—

[*He stops at the sight of HENRY. ALICE hurries in.*

ALICE [*wearily*]. Sylvia, what *is* the matter now ?

SYLVIA [*to ALICE and HENRY*]. Simply that if you two won't tell me what I want to know about matrimony—the two people from whom I most might expect some enlightenment—I am going to have in somebody who *will* tell me.

MRS. TEMPLE [*in another part of the house*]. William—!

HENRY [*darkly*]. You want to know what's the matter with matrimony ? *I'll tell you—*

ALICE. Now, my dear Henry—

SYLVIA. Don't mind her—tell us ! You made such a charming lover, Henry ; and as a husband you're such a collapse—!

HENRY. I am the husband of commerce—the common or household victim. I am George Herbert five years hence.

GEORGE. Oh !

HENRY. If I thought you'd believe me, I shouldn't say so. You are doomed to marry—you would marry Sylvia if she kept pulling out your hair all through the ceremony—because your instinct recognises that marriage is one of the necessities of life—like bread, butter and onions. The worst evils of life are the rank necessities—money, marriage and morality.

SYLVIA. How you must suffer, Henry, when you hide your true feeling under such poor cynicism ; when you don't dare speak one honest word !

GEORGE. And, begging your pardon, you are not George Herbert five years hence. If Sylvia takes her future from you, allow me to say that I don't blame her for weakening to-night.

[HENRY contents himself with humming the *Wedding March*, as he makes himself comfortable again.

ALICE. You must acknowledge, George, that she's giving up a good deal to marry you.

GEORGE. I don't see what she's giving up.

ALICE. Every woman who marries one man at least gives up the chance of marrying some other man.

GEORGE [suspiciously]. What other man ?

ALICE. O, the man who might have been what her husband isn't.

SYLVIA [to GEORGE]. Aren't you stirred by their enthusiasm for the state we're headed for ?

HENRY. Alice and I have this in common—we realise that marriage is a practical joke.

ALICE. Oh, if they don't marry each other, they'll marry someone else.

HENRY. We've bought our presents and we've come up to town, and we feel entitled to witness the slaughter. I want to smile—along with the villagers. And Alice wants to weep a little.

GEORGE. I'll wager she has plenty of chance at home.

ALICE [*shrugging*]. I have my three children. I don't pretend—

HENRY. They're not children—they're all girls !

ALICE [*warmly*]. And they're all *going to*—going to *stay* girls !

SYLVIA [*to GEORGE*]. And yet, when they were married, didn't the sun shine and the birds sing ; and didn't he say he was the happiest man in the world ?

ALICE. And [*to HENRY*] *didn't* the villagers smile !
[MRS. TEMPLE *hurriedly returns, followed by TEMPLE*.

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia, *now* what have you said ?

SYLVIA. Trying to make George see that if there is anything that can save *us* from being like *them*—no pains are too great for discovering it. And he won't see !

TEMPLE [*to GEORGE*]. George, have you never seen a locomotive standing at a station, all ready to start, with the steam blowing off with perhaps more than a musical intensity ? That's all this is, my boy !

SYLVIA. Father, if I blow up, you'll have fifteen guineas' worth of floral decorations to wear in the

City to-morrow. Five years ago one man told me things about marriage straight from the shoulder—things I would give worlds to remember. Simply because I have asked him to come here to-night, George indulges in jealousy.

TEMPLE. Asked whom to come here to-night, on the eve of your marriage?

SYLVIA. Mr. Dellamy.

TEMPLE. Mr. Dellamy—a comparative stranger to-night?—!

GEORGE. The only living man, she says, who can answer the question—"why the book ends *there*."

SYLVIA [*pointing to HENRY and ALICE*]. If you prefer—why it ends *there*!

TEMPLE. I'm constantly hearing about Mr. Dellamy, but not as an authority on marriage.

HENRY. He is one.

TEMPLE. What makes you think so?

HENRY. He has half a million pounds and he doesn't marry.

MRS. TEMPLE. Then I consider him an enemy to society.

TEMPLE. There isn't anything Mr. Dellamy can tell you that I can't tell you, my child. Ask me.

SYLVIA. Very well, father. Father, if your married life hasn't fulfilled the dreams you had a generation ago, when you used to sit on this sofa with my mother—frankly, *why* hasn't it?

TEMPLE [*disliking the question*]. *If* it hasn't, ask your mother.

MRS. TEMPLE [*as SYLVIA turns to her*]. Your father undertook to answer.

TEMPLE [*as SYLVIA turns again to him*]. I consider your question highly impertinent.

SYLVIA [*hurt*]. Mr. Dellamy has no fear.

ALICE. Mr. Dellamy has no wife.

MRS. TEMPLE. Alice—have *you* been talking to Sylvia ? Have you been taking her aside ?

ALICE. Oh, she's heard what Henry says about my girls. You shouldn't have asked us to dinner, mother—on a night which reminds us both too much of times that have gone.

SYLVIA. At the worst, couldn't it remind you that you are companions in misfortune ?

ALICE. Oh, mother, how can Sylvia understand ? [To SYLVIA] Good heaven, except that we may expect to live longer, Henry and I are no worse off than father and mother. I wasn't at heart any keener about marrying than you are. I should have much preferred to go on with him indefinitely, playing tennis, dancing—doing all the things that you and George do. But Henry wouldn't have it so—the world wouldn't have it so ; and—[*shrugs*].

SYLVIA. And you never thought that there might be a more circumspect way to arrange these affairs—at the beginning ?

ALICE. Suppose I have ? You and I are only by-products in the process which was to produce a younger brother. I have no doubt that you have been given to understand, as I was, that

this fact will duly be reflected in your father's will.

TEMPLE [*long-suffering, to HENRY*]. They don't understand the structure of society—they don't understand !

ALICE. I understand that we two have been given the choice of marrying—and of hurrying up about it—or of living an abnormal life, full of false sentimentalities and full of bitterness, without importance and without position—on a basis of poverty. It makes any man cheap at the price, I suppose, and entitled to possession on completion of purchase. And if *any* man won't do—if you want to pay a higher price for some man—and I don't say some men are not worth it, while you *have* them—I mean if you want to be hunted out of society for having been too fastidious, then everything in law and in social life and in the unfathomable nature of the male animal, makes it too improbable that you can keep your man after you have paid for him. And so I advise you to jog along with your George.

HENRY. Hear ! Hear !

SYLVIA. Oh ! you as much as tell me baldly that, though you live together, you abhor each other !

ALICE. Oh, why don't you leave me alone ! Do you think I don't cling to the shreds of my illusion ? Do you think he and I stand perpetually looking the facts in the face ? Why do you insist [*tearfully*] on my—saying things like this !

[*She turns away from the rest, and dries her eyes.*

TEMPLE. Well, well, well !

GEORGE [*to HENRY*]. You've been frank enough with me. I call you a brute.

HENRY. Of course I am. If I weren't I shouldn't be a husband. You can't make husbands out of anything but brutes. Poets are too brittle. But—since we're having a shareholders' meeting—I'm not in the running with what *you'll* develop into !

MRS. TEMPLE. I never heard such cynical talk in all my life ! You are both ungrateful girls, when one thinks what we have done for you. Alice lives much better in her own house than she did in this. [*To SYLVIA*] So will you ! [*To TEMPLE*] Sylvia always was obstinate : she never *would* take her medicine !

TEMPLE [*quickly*]. That is no indication that she will be obstinate with George.

MRS. TEMPLE [*sweetly*]. Oh, no—I didn't mean that, George !

TEMPLE. *You, Jane, always* took your medicine.
[HENRY chuckles.]

GEORGE. Sylvia seems to think that after we are married I shall treat her differently. It won't be so.

HENRY. Bravo, my boy ! That's the song to walk the plank with to-morrow ! That's what *I* said when *I* went to the block.

TEMPLE [*laughing, to counteract the general depression*]. You see, George, there's nothing like a saving sense of humour !

MRS. TEMPLE. I should like to know what it saves. You will regret some day that you have always tolerated irreverence in your house !

TEMPLE [*with sudden exasperation*]. And in two seconds you are going to tell me that twenty years ago I oughtn't to have abolished family prayers ! Sylvia, if you want to know what makes difficulties in domestic life, *I'll* give you an example ! You know that I am a religious man. But I am also a man with advanced ideas. Your mother never ceases to charge me, in and out of season, because when my antediluvian father died—after having made his dogmas the bane of my existence—I abolished family prayers. She knows as well as I do that after he left us, we had no more to pray for than we could manage once a week. But your mother talks about it like a perpetual phonograph ! If that sheds any light on married life, you are welcome to it.

SYLVIA [*with a faint smile*]. Your play, mother.

MRS. TEMPLE. I decline to make any comment whatsoever on your father. If he chooses to misbehave towards me, at a time when we ought to act like a united and joyous family ; if he chooses to conduct himself in a vulgar manner, without the least delicacy and with the most shocking disrespect for his late father, I shall preserve the silence of a Christian woman. And I—

TEMPLE. And she declines to make any comment on me whatsoever ! [*Hotly*] If I were to tell you, Sylvia—

SYLVIA. Oh, don't, father ! Mr. Dellamy can tell me things that I don't already know.

TEMPLE [*stung*]. Then on such a night as this I decline, out of a decent respect for your future husband, to have you see Mr. Dellamy. And *that* is a point on which your mother agrees with me !

MRS. TEMPLE. I do not ! It is you who agree with me. I do not approve of *any* Mr. Dellamy.

SYLVIA [*tensely*]. George, will you ask father to reconsider that ? [GEORGE *is silent*.] George !

GEORGE. Even though I think he's right ?

SYLVIA. Yes, please.

GEORGE [*after hesitation*]. Sylvia, it's a wrong way for me to start with you. I can't !

SYLVIA. Start where ?

GEORGE. To start on our married career. I'm sorry, but I——

SYLVIA. We *haven't* started, yet.

ALICE. Oh, don't be such a goose !

TEMPLE. Absurdity ! On the eve of the greatest day of your life !

SYLVIA. If to-morrow is to be the greatest day, what are to be the days that follow ? [She points to ALICE.] Downhill to this ?

MRS. TEMPLE. Oh ! I know I shall be ill to-morrow !

SYLVIA. Father, if this were not the eve of my marriage, would you let me see Mr. Dellamy to-night ?

TEMPLE. Of course, my sweet child !

SYLVIA. You are sure ?

TEMPLE. Of course, my angel !

SYLVIA. Then this is *not* the eve of my marriage.

MRS. TEMPLE, ALICE, TEMPLE. Sylvia !

SYLVIA. Not until I have talked with this man whose candour you seem so afraid of—Mr. Dellamy.

GEORGE. Ah, Sylvia !

SYLVIA [*to GEORGE*]. What harm can Mr. Dellamy do you ? What harm can he do me ? He is celebrated—respected, everywhere—even your gods have favoured him. I *will* see him ! If not in one place, then—if I can—in another. You make me long to see him ! [*The parlour-maid appears.*] You make me believe that Mr. Dellamy is the wisest, the frankest, the most clear-headed friend I have ! And I *will* see him !

THE MAID [*announcing*]. Mr. Dellamy.

[DELLAMY *is thirty-eight. A well-ordered self-confidence and a broad experience of the world, enable him to divine the situation. The unconventional attitudes of the family have quickly altered. HENRY is the first to break the silence. He rushes across the path of MRS. TEMPLE's unconcealed hostility.*

HENRY. How d'ye do, Dellamy ! How d'ye do !

SYLVIA [*approaching to offer her hand*]. Thank you for coming, Mr. Dellamy.

DELLAMY. Thank you for thinking of me, Miss Temple. [*To the others*] Good evening. [*To SYLVIA*] I couldn't help hearing your flattering description of me. I should like to deserve it. [*To TEMPLE*] But I couldn't help feeling that your daughter spoke against some opposition. If my presence—

TEMPLE. My dear Mr. Dellamy—nothing of the kind!

ALICE [*likewise*]. You are quite mistaken.

[DELLAMY'S *eyes now fix appreciatively on SYLVIA*.

TEMPLE. We were merely expressing our astonishment that my daughter should assume that a man of world-wide interest, like yourself, should be able to spare the time—

DELLAMY. But the world is no wider than my interest in your daughter. Five years at the ends of the earth have proved that to me. Whenever I have had time to think of England, how could I help thinking of your daughter? [*He responds to MRS. TEMPLE's unmelting disapproval.*] But if, perhaps—

MRS. TEMPLE. I questioned, as William *says*, whether just before her going away, my daughter was strong enough to—to—

DELLAMY. To see me? I'll keep in mind the hour. To me she *means* strength—the kind of strength that the nation stands in need of. [*To SYLVIA*] You are going away just as I have come back for the second time in five years? I'm leaving again—quite too soon! Shall I perhaps be where you are going? I—should be glad if—

SYLVIA [*with quick intuition*]. Mr. Dellamy, this is Mr. Herbert. [*GEORGE bows stiffly; she surveys GEORGE a little quizzically.*] Mr. Herbert is planning to be married to-morrow—

DELLAMY [*graciously*]. Ah!

SYLVIA. —to me.

[DELLAMY is taken by surprise, and for an instant disconcerted.]

DELLAMY. Oh ! [As quickly he recovers] Oh ! I offer you my deepest congratulations, sir.

GEORGE [shortly]. You well may.

[There is a moment when DELLAMY seems about to cut his visit short.

SYLVIA. Won't you sit down ?

DELLAMY [not persuaded]. I can easily understand why—on the evening before your marriage, Miss Temple, your family—

SYLVIA [deeply]. You won't understand anything until I've told you, Dellamy. There is something you can do for me—something very friendly.

DELLAMY. I am fortunate—if you are sure of that—?

TEMPLE. It appears, Mr. Dellamy, that you are an expert on the subject of marriage.

DELLAMY [with humour]. Because I've been getting gold out of low-grade ores ? No—I remember ! Your daughter has spoken of the views I held five years ago—and still hold—views rather startling to some people, I fancy—about marriage.

MRS. TEMPLE. My daughter hasn't been brought up, Mr. Dellamy, to entertain any views harmful to the institution of marriage.

DELLAMY. Then perhaps your views are similar to mine, Mrs. Temple ?

MRS. TEMPLE. There is nothing new in any of my views about anything.

DELLAMY [charmingly]. I have always known you as a very Christian lady, Mrs. Temple. [To SYLVIA] How can I serve you, before I go back to my club ?

SYLVIA [fetching him the book, “*Love Among the Roses*”]. I wish to ask you something about this.

[DELLAMY begins to glance over its first pages.

MRS. TEMPLE [meanwhile]. Alice, don’t bring up your girls to read novels. Especially novels about married life, written by unmarried women who listen at keyholes ! When *I* was a girl novels were written mostly by men, and girls could read some of them. Now they are written largely by superfluous women, and girls can read none of them. The reason for Sylvia’s state of mind is not the novels that end *there* [points to book] ; it is those that don’t end there. If I had *my* way, I should have all novels and all plays censored by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the London Hospital.

SYLVIA. Thanks, mother. [To DELLAMY] Would you mind reading the closing paragraph ?

[Instead of reading it, DELLAMY closes the volume and lays his palm upon it.

DELLAMY [with a twinkle in his eye]. I have read the opening paragraph, and I think the closing paragraph states what a fine day it was when the hero came into his brother’s money. It reminds you how simple and expensive her wedding gown was. And I believe all the birds were singing, although it was eleven o’clock in the morning ; and—the arrangement of wild flowers in the meadows was according to the practice of the best authors. And so at two o’clock they drove down to the South-Eastern Station—to catch the one o’clock train ; and the aged porter at the lodge wiped a

tear from his furrowed cheek—he having expected a half-sovereign. [Save GEORGE and MRS. TEMPLE, the others are amused. But DELLAMY suddenly gasps—with a look to GEORGE.] I—I beg a thousand pardons ! Have I been misled by a pseudonym ? Is this gentleman the author of the book ?

SYLVIA. Oh dear, no !

GEORGE [stiffly]. I bought it to read to Sylvia. I consider it a rather fairish book—as such things go.

DELLAMY. Then you convince me.

SYLVIA. The book does end about as you say. And, Dellamy, I have wanted to ask you—why the book *ends there*.

DELLAMY [keenly]. Why the book ends there ?

SYLVIA. Why, when two people believe that all their future is guaranteed by what they think they are to each other ; when life seems happier than it ever has seemed before—why the book suddenly ends—*there* ?

DELLAMY [with deliberation]. You wish me to try to answer this ?

SYLVIA. You will—won't you ?

TEMPLE. We felt, Mr. Dellamy, that to call in a man like you, of world-wide interests——

MRS. TEMPLE. At half-past nine——

TEMPLE. To answer a trivial question——

DELLAMY. Mr. Temple, what every woman whispers to herself when she's going to be married—and what your daughter has the courage to speak aloud—surely that's not a trivial question !

SYLVIA [triumphantly]. Ah !

MRS. TEMPLE. I object to the cynical assumption, which is so fashionable now, that every marriage must be a failure.

DELLAMY. I agree with you, Mrs. Temple—a lottery can no more be run without prizes than it can be run without fools.

HENRY [*to ALICE*]. It's the fools who get the prizes, dear !

ALICE. I wish it were !

MRS. TEMPLE. My daughter is exceedingly happy over the prospect of to-morrow.

DELLAMY. I am sure of that.

ALICE [*in her best manner*]. Then, Mr. Dellamy, do tell us what's the matter with Sylvia !

DELLAMY. She wants to know why, if life is so worth living beyond this point, every book isn't worth writing beyond this point.

GEORGE [*with crass irrelevance*]. But you must admit, sir, that where we sit to-night is the heart of the greatest civilisation the world has yet produced.

DELLAMY [*turning to him with surprise*]. I do. Isn't it a pity we haven't been able to do better ? But you don't deduce from that that you know my views about marriage ?

MRS. TEMPLE. I can assure you that any views looking to the alteration of marriage, as it is ordained in the Bible——

DELLAMY. And very frankly defined in the Prayer Book.

MRS. TEMPLE. Here such views will fall on barren ground.

DELLAMY. I am sure of it.

SYLVIA. I'm waiting so patiently for you to answer my question !

DELLAMY [*with deliberation*]. Must I ?

TEMPLE. I admit that I have some curiosity to hear your panacea, Mr. Dellamy.

DELLAMY. There is no panacea. Even death may not be one. Marriages may be continued in another life.

HENRY. I said he was an authority. Authorities are always cheerful—— !

MRS. TEMPLE. I suppose he wants to abolish marriage altogether. I have heard of such people.

DELLAMY. I shouldn't think of trying to influence any marriage but my own, Mrs. Temple. [To SYLVIA] I must take you seriously, mustn't I ? But that requires me first to explain myself, with that same frankness I have always admired in you.

MRS. TEMPLE. I do not think that marriage is a subject which can be treated with frankness. I should prefer——

TEMPLE. Jane, I am deeply interested in what Mr. Dellamy is about to say.

DELLAMY [*to TEMPLE*]. If I answer her question against what I feel is a strong opposition——

TEMPLE. My dear sir, I assure you there is none—— none !

DELLAMY. It's because, when called upon in the name of friendship, I can't possibly be wanting to a lady whom, five years ago, I asked to marry me.

[*This makes an effect upon the family.*

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia ! You never told your mother ! You never told *me* !

DELLAMY. It was not sufficiently important. Your daughter declined. I went away.

SYLVIA [smiling]. Rather cheerfully, I thought.

DELLAMY. Why not ? I had tried not to take you at the least disadvantage ; and, as I look back, I think I had fairly succeeded. I never said that you were more charming than you are, or that you were *as* charming as I found you. I shouldn't attempt anything so difficult to express in mere words. I never exaggerated your beauty. I never praised my constancy. I never pictured married life to you as a heaven of all play and no work. I believe there is no such heaven. I never counted on the ignorance about life which I fancy you share with those of your age. And there were a lot of things I never said to you because it seems to me that one endearment spoken by a husband is worth a hundred spoken by a lover. And *still* you would not marry me. But I never gave up the thought that some day you would change your mind.

[*Smiles at the disconcertedness of the others.*

GEORGE. Are you going to take up the subject now ?

SYLVIA. George !

DELLAMY. No, Mr. Herbert—not remotely. I indulge in this appalling frankness only because I must make it clear that to deny answering her question to-night would be to deny all that I

said to her—just before we parted, five years ago. And that's impossible.

ALICE. You are making it dreadfully serious.

DELLAMY. How can I make it more serious than it is ? Why *does* the book end there ? Why do so many of us join this great procession to the music of this beautiful promise, with the prime of youth to carry us on, with poetry and the joy of life tingling in our blood ; only to find—*beyond* where the book ends—disillusionment, mockery, and despair, and cynicism ?

[HENRY and ALICE are *self-conscious*.

SYLVIA. *Why*, Dellamy ?

DELLAMY. Miss Temple, for most of us the only real knowledge is experience ; the only teacher—the suffering we have helped to bring upon ourselves. [He puts down the book.] That is a romance ; that is a tale of what we call romantic love : the ordinary experience——

GEORGE. *Our* experience is *not* ordinary, Mr. Dellamy.

DELLAMY. The ordinary experience of believing that one's experience is not ordinary. And in that respect the book *is* true to life ; true because the book does end there. And the book ends there—because what we call romantic love ends there.

MRS. TEMPLE, TEMPLE, GEORGE [*scoffing*]. Oh !

MRS. TEMPLE. This caps all cynicism ! I should think my daughter would have refused you ! [Appealing for harsh measures] William——!

TEMPLE [*condescendingly*]. I shall take issue with

you there, sir ! Marriage is the rock on which society stands ! We shall never do away with marriage !

DELLAMY. That isn't taking issue with anything I said—that is agreeing with what I think, Mr. Temple. The first thing to do with marriage is to try to understand it.

MRS. TEMPLE. Then if he isn't going to do away with marriage, what *is* he going to do with it ?

DELLAMY. Your daughter hasn't asked me that ; and it soon *will* be half-past nine, Mrs. Temple.

SYLVIA. I ask you this : If what we call romantic love dies at the altar—why must it ?

DELLAMY. Because what we call romantic love is more or less a fraud. It promises what it cannot perform, and professes virtues which it does not possess. Because nature is such an incalculable force that only the highest intellectual and spiritual powers of youth can do so much as balance it.

MRS. TEMPLE. What *is* he trying to express ?

DELLAMY. I am saying to your daughter what you doubtless have often said to her yourself : that what we call romantic love is more or less a subtle fraud upon the physical exuberance of youth. [MRS. TEMPLE *stiffly rises and marches from the room*. DELLAMY *quickly bridges a trying moment by approaching SYLVIA*.] Good night.

SYLVIA [depressed]. There's no reason for your going so soon.

DELLAMY. I'm afraid there is. [*She unwillingly*

offers her hand.] Good night, Mr. Herbert. I wish you both the very greatest happiness.

GEORGE. The wishes of my friends will be fulfilled, sir. None of us agree with any of your conclusions.

HENRY [*keenly*]. How do you know ?

ALICE [*astonished*]. Henry !

DELLAMY [*mildly*]. I don't see how you can know, Mr. Herbert, without more knowledge of my conclusions. Good night, Mrs. Matthewson.

ALICE [*inclined to be interested in him*]. Good night. Do you *always* try to convince people ?

DELLAMY. Never ! Real convictions don't come from without. Good night, Mr. Temple.

SYLVIA [*calling him back*]. Dellamy ! [*She searches for words.*] I don't see it as you do. But if I am wrong and you are right—and it does perish at the altar—

DELLAMY. If what we call romantic love does.

SYLVIA. Then—beyond :—What is there beyond ?

DELLAMY. Dear Miss Temple, for those who can find it, I know that there is something better. I hope *you'll* find it.

SYLVIA. If it's something better—what is it ?

DELLAMY. That's to discover in oneself. I hope that some day I shall meet you, and you will tell me that *you* have discovered it. [*He turns to HENRY*] Good night.

HENRY. Good night, old chap.

DELLAMY [*at the door to TEMPLE*]. There must be melancholy for you in this last evening, sir.

[SYLVIA wistfully follows him with her eyes, while GEORGE jealously observes her.

TEMPLE [comfortably]. Hm—yes. Of course my son comes back to us very soon. You seem to take a pessimistic view of life, Mr. Dellamy.

DELLAMY. For myself? My dear sir, I'm an optimist.

[A moment's thoughtful pause, as the others listen for the street door to close on DELLAMY.

ALICE. I don't see why he calls himself an optimist——?

HENRY. Drawing-room term for "bachelor."

[As MRS. TEMPLE stiffly returns from the other room, TEMPLE returns from the hall.

TEMPLE. What is that man? Is he a theosophist, a spiritualist, or a member of the Fabian Society?

MRS. TEMPLE. That man is an atheist. I never will have him in this house again! That man is a dangerous character. I shudder to think of his proposing marriage to Sylvia. I don't profess to understand what he wants to do with society, but I know that it is something painful!

HENRY. Right! He wants it to improve itself. He is an optimist.

ALICE. Won't he cut a dash when he does want to marry!

HENRY. Dash! My dear, he'll cut his throat, first.

ALICE. And when he does marry, the only thing to distinguish him from all the other husbands in the world will be his laundry mark.

[A moment of thoughtful silence ; SYLVIA is gazing at space.

GEORGE [letting out his anger]. I can quite understand your mother's leaving the room. And because some people make stupid mistakes in marrying the wrong person, he assumes that every marriage must be a failure.

SYLVIA. He assumes nothing of the kind. You haven't the least understanding of what he said.

GEORGE. Neither has anyone else ! He talked rot ; he talked rot, and it wasn't decent. And any girl with a proper sense of—— [SYLVIA rises and turns her direct gaze on him.] Well, I don't say that. But I——

SYLVIA [tensely, ignoring him]. Father !——

GEORGE. That wasn't what I was going to say. I merely——

SYLVIA. Father !——

MRS. TEMPLE. What is the matter, Sylvia ?

SYLVIA [with difficulty, but with force]. Father, I don't want to be married to-morrow ! Not to-morrow ! I want to wait :—a week. Let me think it over for one week !

[GEORGE grasps a chair as if he would smash it.

MRS. TEMPLE. Oh, you vacillating child ! You inconsiderate child ! What shall we do with you ?

TEMPLE. To dream of throwing all our preparations to the wind !

MRS. TEMPLE. She's going to be married—and she wants "to think it over" !

SYLVIA. Ah, father, let me have one week more !

Alice, why can't you say a word to them? Only one week! I must have a week, Alice!

ALICE. Oh, a thousand weeks won't help you.

SYLVIA [*to GEORGE*]. That's what marriage has made of her! Father, I *won't* be married to-morrow!

TEMPLE [*severely*]. Now, Sylvia! I say, Sylvia——!

SYLVIA. I *won't*! I *will* have a week! George! [*GEORGE won't look at her*.] Ah! you must see that I——

[*Without looking behind him, GEORGE walks out of the room.* SYLVIA, *disconcerted*, gazes after him. HENRY and ALICE *look greatly bored*.]

MRS. TEMPLE [*aghast*]. William!——?

[TEMPLE *hurries after GEORGE*.]

MRS. TEMPLE. Henry, why don't you do something! [*HENRY ironically seizes a paper-knife and slowly follows TEMPLE.*] [To SYLVIA] If you don't make the most abject apology to that man, at once!—I feel that I could let you go unmarried to your grave!

ALICE. O, mother, let her be! This time, George will have gone without his hat. It's all over. Come away, mother!

[MRS. TEMPLE and ALICE *leave the room, following the others.* ALICE *closes behind her the door to the hall.* SYLVIA *is left alone, not quite sure of herself.* In a moment GEORGE *rushes back, and closes her in with him.*]

GEORGE. Sylvia! Sylvia—you're not going to break it off? Oh, why don't they leave us alone! Sylvia—don't kill me! My God! I could die

for you, this moment ! [He takes her hand.]
Sylvia !

SYLVIA [letting him keep her limp hand]. Oh, do you think it's you I'm afraid of ? It's *it—it!* It's the thing that turns them all to clay. It will turn *us* to clay ! [He tries to draw her near him.] It will make *us* like *them* ! And I can't bear it !

GEORGE. Sylvia, it won't—it won't ! I love you ! I worship the ground you tread on !

SYLVIA [shuddering]. Yes ; and we all do tread on the ground ! He said it ! Oh !

[She draws her hand away from him.

GEORGE [quickly takes her in his arms, stroking her, tensely]. I love you ! My Sylvia—my Sylvia !

SYLVIA. Ah !—you know—you know how you make me—— [She melts to his closer embrace, and turns her eyes to him.] George—George ! I want to be good to you—I want to be patient and just to you ! But I——

[Shivers, and would release herself.

GEORGE [drawing her closer]. I love you !

SYLVIA. Oh !—I want to be loved ! But—George—swear to me—swear to me it never shall be different from this—never be different !

GEORGE. I swear it before my Maker ! I love you ! [He kisses her madly.] I love you ! Say that you love me ! Say it !

SYLVIA. I—I do say it ! I will marry you to-morrow !

GEORGE [with a triumphant laugh, his hand sweeping down her arm]. Ah ! Sylvia ! Sylvia !

II

[This is the garden of GEORGE HERBERT's house in Campden Hill. Two years have passed, and this is, for London, an unusually warm evening in July. The house at your left is a spacious one; and a high hedge, and the trees on the lawn beyond, hide the near-by rows of other houses. French windows give from what may be the drawing-room; and, beyond them, a door affords access to the garden. Here at your right an awning has been arranged over a table, a bench and some chairs; and electric light proceeds from under this awning. ALICE MATTHEWSON sits patiently on this bench, so dressed that we may assume that she has been summoned by the telegram she holds open in her hand. HENRY MATTHEWSON, with his hat on, comes into the garden from the house, discovers his wife, and without salutation, takes another telegram from his pocket.]

HENRY. I got this at the club. [He reads] “If you want to see how the book does end, I advise you to come to my house to-night.”

ALICE [showing her telegram]. Signed, “George.”
Sylvia has ceased to worship her wooden idol.

HENRY. Where is she ?

ALICE [*with a shrug*]. Aviated.

HENRY. Aviated ?

ALICE. Out of the house.

HENRY. For good ?

ALICE. Certainly not for worse. There's a broken chair in the dining-room. The drawing-room is locked ! George finished his dinner at the club.

HENRY. She had already left the house——?

ALICE. No. George made his exit at the entrée, I gather. Sylvia—finished her sweet—to the bitter end.

HENRY. Really ! All most women do is to rush upstairs and put on something suitable to weep in.

ALICE [*grimly*]. Most men hadn't better rely on that for ever.

HENRY [*likewise*]. Most men have to.

[*A pause, while he contemplates the house.*

ALICE [*thoughtfully*]. Henry ! To-night where is Mr. Dellamy ?

HENRY. Sir Hugh Dellamy now. Oh, he hasn't been in England again—till yesterday.

ALICE. And to-night Sir Hugh Dellamy is in London. Do you remember Sylvia's question to him ? He said there was something beyond and better than what we call romantic love, when it perishes at the altar. What did he mean by something "beyond" ? Mother thinks he meant himself. I've asked everybody.

HENRY. Except me.

ALICE. I think he's rather fantastic.

HENRY. Hm ! Dellamy fantastic ! He's the biggest practical success of his time. He'll be a peer some day.

ALICE. He's not married yet.

HENRY. If Sir Hugh is fantastic, let us all be ! In fact, my friend, allow me to tell you that there *is* something—beyond.

ALICE [*with irony*]. Oh, very well ! What is the secret of domestic happiness ? Has Sir Hugh handed it over to you ? It seems too big to bring home, in your forty horse-power car !

HENRY. Alice, you imply something I don't admit. I consider that for the last two years I have been a model husband.

ALICE. Only a model father. *Not* a model husband. This is our longest conversation—about anything interesting—for the *whole* two years. As a husband, you are one of the dumb failures.

HENRY [*grimly*]. I repeat that I have munched my straw for two years :—a model husband. And not a Paris model either.

ALICE. Whatever you repeat, Henry, must be true. What is Dellamy's Infallible Household Remedy, then ? I should be charmed to know.

HENRY. It is something to discover for oneself. And unless *you* manage to enlarge your spirit—

ALICE. My spirit ! *You*—talk to *me* about "spirituality" ? Oh !

HENRY. —and unless you cease to treat life so trivially—

ALICE. Trivially ! *You* say "trivially" ! And

you dare—you *dare* to talk to *me* about my “spirit”! Oh !

HENRY. If not trivially, then why, the night before Sylvia married this early Victorian block-head, when she had a moment of weakening—why didn’t you utter a word to support her ?

ALICE. Ah !—why didn’t you ?

HENRY. Because I was treating life too trivially. And for *you* I repeat “trivially”; and I repeat “spirit” !

ALICE. “Spirit”—from you !—“spirit” ? You brute !

MRS. TEMPLE [*heard from within the house*]. Sylvia !

ALICE. You insufferable brute !

[MRS. TEMPLE *rushes breathlessly from the house, her hat on*.

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia ! [*She stops at door, and discovers that SYLVIA is not present.*] Oh, I thought it was Sylvia ! I thought Sylvia had come back and they were making it up !

[WILLIAM TEMPLE *follows her, hat in hand*.

TEMPLE. Alice, where has Sylvia gone ?

ALICE. She hasn’t left word.

MRS. TEMPLE. William, I knew it ! I knew it—from the night before they were married !

TEMPLE. Henry, must we take this seriously ? Jane and I were sitting together in the drawing-room——

ALICE [*quizzically*]. Together ? Were you reading “Love Among the Roses” ?

MRS. TEMPLE. He was asleep.

TEMPLE. I was trying to get a short nap, and your mother kept varying the monotony of her utterance—doubtless something about family prayers—just enough to keep me awake. There came this telegram. [He shows a telegram. ALICE and HENRY show him theirs: he is astonished.] And yet—why, why, they dined with us only Tuesday night !

ALICE. I suppose it saved them from dining with each other.

MRS. TEMPLE. William, where has Sylvia gone ? William, why don't you do something ?

TEMPLE. Just wait ! Just wait ! Now, in a case like this—

MRS. TEMPLE [with sudden inspiration]. Henry ! Henry, where is *that man* ? That man who entered our house the night before Sylvia was married, and declared that marriage must be abolished ! I shall *never* forget the things he said !

HENRY. Sir Hugh Dellamy ? He only came back to England yesterday. He didn't say that marriage must be—

MRS. TEMPLE [tremendously]. He's back ! That man has come back, and Sylvia has left this house ! I see everything !

TEMPLE. Stuff and nonsense ! Stuff ! Why should we assume that this is serious ? Alice, what has Sylvia confided to you ?

ALICE. Nothing. I only know this : When Sylvia and George were first married, George

used to pity me and Sylvia used to pity Henry. Now George pities Henry and Sylvia pities me.

TEMPLE. Heaven pity us all ! I don't see why any man can't get along with his wife, if I can get along with mine. [To MRS. TEMPLE, who has discovered SYLVIA's blotter on the table, and is examining a piece of blotting-paper.] Heh ! What are you doing with other people's correspondence ?

MRS. TEMPLE [with dignity]. I am above handling other people's correspondence. This is blotting-paper. [Takes out a small pocket mirror and reflects in it the marks on the paper.] Oh !

TEMPLE. Jane, I forbid you !

MRS. TEMPLE [reading from the mirror]. "D."

TEMPLE. Jane !

MRS. TEMPLE. "e" !

TEMPLE. What ?—"l" ?

MRS. TEMPLE. "l"—Dellamy !

TEMPLE. Jane, you scandalous woman, what does she say ?

MRS. TEMPLE [disappointed]. When she had written that man's name, someone came out and caught her.

TEMPLE. She says so ?

MRS. TEMPLE [scorning him]. Of course she doesn't say so ! She turned the paper over and it blotted. When she had a chance to finish the letter, the little minx let it dry. Sylvia has been corresponding with this Dellamy !

ALICE. Mother, I protest ! Sylvia wouldn't conceal it, even from us.

MRS. TEMPLE. William and Henry, fetch me *that man!*

TEMPLE. Balderdash ! Listen to me ! Sylvia and George started to have one of those domestic readjustments which get frustrated by the presence of expensive servants. George took to his club. Sylvia wants to freeze George's marrow. Probably she has gone to the last place anyone would ever dream of visiting ; I mean, to one of her maiden aunts. A visit to either one of their living tombs would drive any woman back to her husband within two hours.

MRS. TEMPLE. Nothing of the kind ! Sylvia knows that my sisters entirely disapprove of her as a strong-minded woman. Influenced by this Mr. Dellamy—

TEMPLE. Twaddle ! There is no such thing as a strong-minded woman. Henry, please telephone George to come home. [HENRY, *bored*, goes into the house.] Sir Hugh isn't going to figure with any man's wife. Sir Hugh is too rich to be able to afford what it might cost him. Besides, he's a baronet.

MRS. TEMPLE [*scornfully*]. What is a baronet !

TEMPLE. A baronet is someone who wants to be a peer. Alice, send Henry—in haste—to your Aunt Dorothy. You take a cab to your Aunt Miriam. With or without Sylvia, both return here at once. [ALICE *wearily obeys*. To MRS. TEMPLE:] You—

MRS. TEMPLE [*stoutly*]. My own course of action—

TEMPLE. That will be to accompany me to the chaste retirement of your sister Margery—where

I intend to interrupt *her* conversation with *my own*—though her parrot dies of apoplexy ! Come on !

MRS. TEMPLE. William Temple, I will leave here only in the direction of that man !

TEMPLE [*exasperated*]. And whenever he sees you coming, he will leave in the same direction. Fiddle-dee-dee ! [*Calming himself.*] Sylvia, like all the new-fangled women, wants to show her entire independence of man. She's probably driving around Regent's Park at two-and-six an hour, with a messenger boy.

[*He motions her to go with him.*

MRS. TEMPLE. William, I will not leave here —

TEMPLE. Come along, and don't be a fool !

MRS. TEMPLE [*with ominous rage*]. Very well, William Temple, I *will* come along !

[*She sweeps into the house, in front of him.*

TEMPLE [*suddenly suffering in advance*]. I apologise ! I say I apologise ! [*With desperation*] And I'm going to keep apologising ! And I don't want to be interrupted.

[*He follows her.*

[*The closed and curtained French window of the drawing-room cautiously opens. SYLVIA peeps out, then comes into the garden. She is in evening dress, with a scarf over her shoulders. It is evident that she has been in the house all the time. She thoughtfully comes down to the settee and picks up the telegram ALICE has left. She reads it and shrugs. A FOOTMAN appears at the door.*

THE FOOTMAN [*announcing*]. Sir Hugh Dellamy.

SYLVIA. How good of you to come, Sir Hugh !

DELLAMY. When I haven't had a look at you for two years ?

SYLVIA. Just two years to-night.

DELLAMY. How handsomely the two years have treated you, Mrs. Herbert !

SYLVIA. I've a strong constitution. I've been proud of that ever since you said that health was a woman's first virtue. Do you wonder why I asked you to come here to-night ?

DELLAMY. On this anniversary ? I suppose it's to show me what a success your marriage has been.

SYLVIA [*after a moment*]. Yes.

DELLAMY. Well, what are the ingredients of happiness ?—health, beauty, charm, cheerfulness ; a good income, a fine house—and—possibly—I haven't heard whether——

SYLVIA. Whether my marriage has been a success ?

DELLAMY. I was wondering whether I could congratulate your husband on a child ?

SYLVIA. No, Dellamy. No, thank God.

DELLAMY [*scanning her*]. Thank God ?

SYLVIA. Thank God.

[*He scrutinises her ; then decides not to follow up the subject.*

DELLAMY. May I smoke ?

SYLVIA. Please do.

[*He lights a cigarette.*

DELLAMY. It's a charming garden.

SYLVIA [*after a moment*]. I shall never see it again.

DELLAMY [*pained*]. You mean——?

SYLVIA [*looking at space*]. My marriage has been a failure.

[*He turns to scan her again.*

DELLAMY [*indulgently*]. Come, you've had your first little difference with your husband ?

SYLVIA. And sent for you to tell you about it ? I'm not so trivial as that. My marriage has been a failure. Such a strange failure ! It finishes to-night.

DELLAMY [*after a moment*]. Mrs. Herbert, do you realise the gravity of what you say ?

SYLVIA. Yes.

DELLAMY. Surely—surely, you must consider this—you must not act upon an impulse.

SYLVIA. I think the reason why I asked you to come here to-night was that I wanted you to know that I am not so dull, not so commonplace, or so uninspired, that I can't understand, now—all the things you ever said to me about marriage. Please don't think I'm maudlin if I compare you to the sun. But it seems to me that I have always lived surrounded by a kind of darkness about the meaning of life. And when you have talked to me about it, it has been like the sun, dispelling the darkness. I'm in need of the sun, just now.

DELLAMY [*choosing his words*]. I am not the sun : there are hundreds of men like me.

SYLVIA. I was taught that there are hundreds of

suns, somewhere in the universe. But no one has taught me that there are hundreds of men like you. I think I wanted you to know that, out of my own experience, out of my own inspiration, all that you said to me that night, about why the book ends there, and about what there is beyond where the book ends, is as clear to me now, as it is to you. Perhaps it's clearer.

[*He scrutinises her.*

DELLAMY: I think—I think perhaps you'd better tell me what you thought my meaning was.

SYLVIA. Not a personal one, Dellamy. I've *come* to where the book ends. I have looked beyond, looked with all my soul for something better. I have found it. My husband has not found it. He never will.

DELLAMY. He must. You must teach him to. You mustn't fly from it. No effort must be too great: no time must be too long.

SYLVIA. A lifetime? You mustn't measure a woman's time as you measure a man's. A woman's youth is hers to give to her children: not to waste in trying to make a man into something he cannot be. Convince him? You spoke the truth about that, Dellamy. "Real convictions don't come from without." They come from within. They are born in us: life only makes us express them. I have done my duty:—it was to try to find in his spirit the thing one *must* have—not for oneself, but for one's children. It's a very definite thing; and it isn't there. Without it, I can't go on.

DELLAMY. But think where this is going to land you. Don't think only of what you'll be leaving behind. Surely—doesn't your husband love you ?

SYLVIA. Yes ! Just as he loves his food. He doesn't beat me : he doesn't neglect me, nor deceive me, nor deny me anything his money can buy. And he asks me precisely what the learned judge would ask me : " Woman, what more do you want ? " In the public opinion I shall have no case whatever. I shall be understood only by people like you.

DELLAMY [*gravely*]. And I shall be powerless—absolutely powerless !

SYLVIA. Not powerless to understand. You will know what the quantity is that's missing to my marriage. It's the one quantity—the one dignity—that won't let me be the casual, commonplace wife of commerce : the dull, average creature who never sets the world an inch more forward than she found it. But there's nothing more to be said about it, Dellamy, either by me or by you. Now I want to hear you talk about yourself.

[*He cannot return her smile.*

DELLAMY. How can I talk about myself, when you stun me with this !

SYLVIA. When you've been doing so much : commanding and conquering and inspiring everyone, wherever you go ?

DELLAMY [*unhappily*]. Conquering ? It only leaves the eternal problem of conquering oneself !

SYLVIA. I've read about you. In Tibet you

came very near being tortured to death. You went through it like a stone god !

DELLAMY. I'm not one.

SYLVIA. It made me believe that anyone who looks on life in the way I think we both do, must have some of your courage. When I think of that I don't seem afraid of death—not so long as there is water under Westminster Bridge ! [He scans her face.] I wonder what new and convincing thing you'll be doing to-morrow !

DELLAMY. I wonder ! Yes, I wonder ! What did your husband say to my coming here to-night ?

SYLVIA. He broke one of the dining-room chairs.

DELLAMY. That brought about your final determination ?

SYLVIA. His fits of temper are the least I have against him, Dellamy. What woman can't stand that, from the man who provides her with what some people call the Great Illusion ! He finished his dinner at the club.

DELLAMY. And you finished yours in tears ?

SYLVIA. No : I finished it in peace, Dellamy. I am not acting from nerves. I am acting from my convictions, my religion. I made up my mind yesterday.

DELLAMY. To break with him utterly ?

SYLVIA. Yes.

[A pause ; he paces up and down, thoughtfully ; then turns to her.

DELLAMY. I think it will be years before I see

you again. But your husband will associate your leaving this house with my having called on you to-night. You can't afford that. That's why you must postpone this step.

SYLVIA. You mean that he and my family will think you have encouraged me ?

DELLAMY. Yes.

SYLVIA. You do encourage me.

DELLAMY. No ! Most certainly I do not.

SYLVIA. The very sight of you encourages me. Only to see you again, to feel that you are real—that makes me sure that what you are capable of as a man, I am capable of as a woman. You shall see, Dellamy !

DELLAMY. No, I shall not. I shall be on my way to America.

SYLVIA. Not at once, surely ? You came back only yesterday.

DELLAMY. I shall sail to-morrow.

SYLVIA. I shall leave this house to-night.

DELLAMY. I shall not know. I shall have left London to-night. It will be impossible for anyone to say that I as much as enquired after you.

SYLVIA [*depressed*]. You mean that ?

DELLAMY. I mean it. What strength have you to carry out this plan alone ? You will meet the most violent opposition from your family.

[*She sighs.*

SYLVIA. Perhaps you'll never know what strength I had. O, I suppose there was a little glimmer of romance about me, once, when I was a girl.

[Sadly] But I suppose the dust is off my wings for ever now—I only bear the marks of handling now—whether men realise it or not.

DELLAMY. Nonsense !

SYLVIA [*pleased*]. Nonsense——?

DELLAMY. Utter nonsense.

SYLVIA. O, how I shall treasure that ! And you say you are not like the sun !

DELLAMY. I must go now. There is nothing else I can do but go. When the sun sets it means to shine to-morrow. But I'm going away, for a long time, and I do not mean to——

SYLVIA. You don't mean to shine to-morrow ? Perhaps the sun doesn't mean to shine to-morrow. Perhaps it shines because it can't help shining ?

DELLAMY [*shaking his head*]. I—I can say to you honestly but one word, Mrs. Herbert—and that is—good-bye——!

[*She gives her hand.*

SYLVIA. Think of me when you're on the sea, Dellamy—when the sun goes down. Good night.

DELLAMY. Good-bye !

[As he goes towards the door he pauses an instant for a last look at her, but she does not see him. He turns and encounters ALICE, who stops in astonishment. She turns to consult the eyes of her husband.]

DELLAMY [*quickly*]. Good evening, Mrs. Matthewson. Good evening, Matthewson. Good night.

[*He enters the house.*

ALICE [*to HENRY*]. Call him back ! [*HENRY stares.*]

Call him back ! [HENRY goes after him.] Sylvia—you are not going to do anything preposterous—quite understand that.

SYLVIA. Not with *your* preposterous example before me.

[HENRY returns, followed by DELLAMY. ALICE is wanting in the courage of her suspicions ; she looks waveringly to HENRY.]

HENRY [to DELLAMY]. My wife has some silly question she wants to ask you.

ALICE. "Silly question" ! I haven't !

HENRY [grimly]. My wife withdraws her question.

DELLAMY [promptly]. Good night.

[He starts for the door again.]

MRS. TEMPLE [heard within]. I know that I shall find Sylvia only where I find that man.

TEMPLE [within]. Twaddle ! [TEMPLE appears and greets DELLAMY with amazement.] Sir Hugh !

[MRS. TEMPLE appears and draws up stiffly, barring the doorway.]

DELLAMY. Why not, Mr. Temple ?

TEMPLE [recovering]. Of course, Sir Hugh. My wife was labouring under the excitement of—a drive in a taxi.

MRS. TEMPLE [promptly]. If you say my excitement was not about Sir Hugh, it will not be true.

DELLAMY. If the excitement is unpleasant, shall I be able to remove it, Mrs. Temple ?

MRS. TEMPLE [disconcerted]. I—[appealing irritably to her husband]—William—! I am only a woman. There are some things not my office.

TEMPLE. I'm glad you've said so. I came to see my daughter, Sir Hugh. [As if dismissing him, TEMPLE goes to SYLVIA] Good evening, my dear.

DELLAMY. Good night, Mrs. Herbert.

SYLVIA. A pleasant voyage, Dellamy !

[DELLAMY departs. A silence. The others examine SYLVIA'S face.

MRS. TEMPLE [pointedly]. She calls him "Dellamy" ! [To the men] You pair of heroes ! Sylvia—we demand an explanation !

SYLVIA. George appears to have sent telegrams. I think it's for him to explain.

ALICE. Sylvia, you have gone a long way with this man. You were in the drawing-room all the time.

SYLVIA. I am going a long way without him, Alice. *He* was not in the drawing-room.

TEMPLE. Sylvia, I don't imply what your mother sees fit to ; but I do say : anything like an indiscretion—

[He finishes with an expressive shake of his finger and of his head.

MRS. TEMPLE. This man who made love to you on the eve of your wedding, under George's very eyes ! Sylvia, tell me what he has been saying to you.

SYLVIA. If I told you, you wouldn't call it making love to me !

TEMPLE. Sylvia, what was the nature of your interview with Sir Hugh ?

SYLVIA. He wanted to frighten me into living with George for the rest of my life.

TEMPLE. Sylvia, what does this mean ?

ALICE. Sylvia, *you* have been making advances to *him* !

SYLVIA. Alice, you are growing like mother !

HENRY. Sylvia, that's unkind.

MRS. TEMPLE. Hm ! William, do you now acknowledge that this is a dangerous man ?

TEMPLE. Jane, I believe I must. Sylvia, it is our right to know when you expect to see Sir Hugh Dellamy again.

[*The footman appears at the door.*

SYLVIA. I expect never to see him again.

THE FOOTMAN [*announcing*]. Sir Hugh Dellamy.

[*Dellamy makes no pause for salutations.*

DELLAMY. Mrs. Herbert, going along the street I met your husband.

[*George appears, and Dellamy turns to him.*

George's manner is cold and ominous.

GEORGE. Sir Hugh, will you have a chair ?

DELLAMY. Thanks, no.

GEORGE. I asked Sir Hugh things he prefers to answer in the presence of the family. His reasons, doubtless——

DELLAMY. May I state them ? In the last seven years this is only the second time I have had any communication with anyone here. In a few minutes I leave for Liverpool ; in the morning I sail for New York. Does that leave any question for me to answer ?

[*The others fasten on George.*

GEORGE. Did my wife's letter give you the im-

pression that I should find you a desirable caller at my house ?

DELLAMY. Could I assume that it came from a household wanting in harmony on that point ?

GEORGE. It did. Sylvia, why did you write to him ?

SYLVIA. I explained. I invited you to stay.

GEORGE. Hm ! She said she wanted to hear more of your theory for what you doubtless call the reformation of society.

SYLVIA. I did not use that phrase. I said I wanted to hear his voice. That I *must* hear the voice of someone who could understand me when I spoke.

GEORGE [*to DELLAMY*]. What have *your* views to do with *my* married life ?

DELLAMY. That is what I ask you, Mr. Herbert.

MRS. TEMPLE [*stoutly*]. Sir Hugh, you have planted my daughter's mind with *ideas*, which are destructive and scandalous ! I know it !

DELLAMY. May I ask what they are, Mrs. Temple ?

MRS. TEMPLE [*with dignity*]. I don't know. I don't wish to know.

TEMPLE. I feel that I do know. Why should you seek to influence my daughter's mind, even abstractly, on the subject of her marriage ?

DELLAMY [*academically*]. I can think of no reason. But I quite understand you, Mr. Temple. Once you heard me say that what we call romantic love is more or less a fraud on the natural exuberance of youth. And I said that there is something better

than romantic love as most people know it ; and hence, something better than the married life most people experience. There is—for some of us. But perhaps for making such a statement as that I'm bound to become a suspicious character.

TEMPLE. You can say, sir, that two years ago you did not seek to influence my daughter against her marriage on the morrow ?

DELLAMY. Do you realise the gravity of what you imply, sir ? What I most respect in others and most insist upon for myself is freedom of conscience—freedom in one's individual affairs from other people's interference.

MRS. TEMPLE. "Freedom of conscience" ! William, that is a phrase I am bound to associate with irreverence, with—

TEMPLE. With licence, Sir Hugh—with transactions between men and women which—No, sir !—language fails me !

DELLAMY. I am sorry for you, sir. I associate freedom of conscience with respect for humanity ; and with such transactions between men and women as will stand the closest enquiries of their offspring. My dear Mr. Temple, if I should expound my views on marriage, you would think—not that I was standing in the dock—but that you were sitting in your pew, sir. But I'm on my way to Liverpool. Good night !

SYLVIA. Dellamy, will you please not go yet ?

DELLAMY. What reason have I to stay ?

SYLVIA. I want them to see that you have

not influenced me. All you have said was in favour of my living on as I have for the past two years. Father, mother:—that is impossible. My marriage has been a failure. I can no longer live with George. I am going to leave him.

ALICE, MRS. TEMPLE, TEMPLE [*astounded, ashamed*].
Sylvia !

GEORGE. What rot !

SYLVIA. Father, will you take me back to your house ?

TEMPLE. Most certainly not ! We should never be a party to such nonsense—never !

MRS. TEMPLE [*to DELLAMY*]. My daughter is not serious, sir.

GEORGE. Of course she isn't ! Sylvia, what's got hold of you ?

SYLVIA. Then, father, will you lend me some money until I can support myself ?

TEMPLE. I wouldn't lend a penny to exploit such a—such a scandal on the entire family. Stuff !

SYLVIA. Alice, will you lend me a hundred pounds ?

ALICE. No ! Stay at home with your husband, where you belong.

SYLVIA. Then—I have two sixpences, which belonged to me before I was married. I will go on one shilling.

[*Save DELLAMY and HENRY, the others do not take her seriously.*]

HENRY [*who has keenly watched her*]. That takes some doing, Sylvia. You'd better think that over.

SYLVIA. I've been thinking it over for a year, Henry.

MRS. TEMPLE. And you may continue to think it over ; but you'll never attempt it. We shall see to that. [To DELLAMY] I don't see why you linger, sir.

DELLAMY. Nor do I, Mrs. Temple. [To SYLVIA] Good-bye.

SYLVIA. So many thanks, Dellamy.

[In silence DELLAMY departs.]

MRS. TEMPLE [*when it is safe to speak*]. Scandalous! Simply scandalous !

ALICE [*to SYLVIA*]. You seem wanting in responsibility !

SYLVIA. Shall I say where *you* are wanting in responsibility ?

TEMPLE. Now, now—my dear young people—I want you all to reflect that there never was a quarrel without some wrong on both sides. George—Sylvia—it is imperative that you approach each other in the spirit of mutual charity. George—

GEORGE. Of course it is, Mr. Temple ! You don't want your daughter thrown back on *your* hands ! You have a son to look after. You worked hard enough to get rid of her two years ago. You knew you had a fool to deal with [*he indicates himself*]—a young monkey who wouldn't leave your house without his hat ! Bah !

TEMPLE. Confound you, sir ! What do you mean ? You told me you couldn't live without my daughter !

GEORGE. And you knew better, sir ! But you hinted that I was right. And—together with nature and the dressmaker—you made the trick. You knew, when your daughter married me, that she was in love with another man !

ALL [*save SYLVIA*]. Oh !

TEMPLE. Sylvia, do you hear that ?

SYLVIA [*deeply*]. It was so much worse than that, George. So very much worse.

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia——!——?

GEORGE [*glittering*]. Very well—let's have it ! How much worse ?

SYLVIA. It was the worst of all.

ALICE [*with horror*]. Sylvia——!

SYLVIA. Yes, George—I was in love with *you*. And I'm not, any more. That is the most terrible thing that can happen.

GEORGE. Hah ! [*To others*] That's the kind of thing that makes conversation in this house ! By Jove ! you needn't talk of mutual charity to me, Mr. Temple. My wife isn't going to lead me by the ear as yours does you !

SYLVIA. Oh, need we discuss it in a passion, George ?

GEORGE. Passion ! What do you know of passion ? You've become a stone—a fish ! There's just one issue here—This is my house. Sir Hugh Dellamy, the next time he calls, will be politely informed that you are out.

SYLVIA. It will be profoundly true.

GEORGE. What do you mean by that ?

MRS. TEMPLE. Oh, Sylvia !

SYLVIA. I mean no harm to you, and no anger, George. You'll soon right yourself. There are plenty of girls who will insist upon no more from a man than they get from you. [To the others] So long as George gets what they would give him, he isn't particularly bad-tempered. I'm sorry that I ask more than he *can* give.

GEORGE. You mean you've got ideas—sentiments—beliefs. Then why don't you go and decorate the church with them, as other women do ? For God's sake, go and start a soup kitchen somewhere, and keep this rot out of the peace and comfort of a home ! But you think, you dream, you talk of nothing but some high-falutin nonsense of this man Dellamy.

SYLVIA. No ; it's all my own.

GEORGE. God knows what it's about !

SYLVIA. So I devoutly suspect. My ideas begin where yours leave off ; and that makes discussion impossible. You've a great idea of your strength of character, George ; but you'll never be able to get along without some woman or other. Then—the sooner the better—the other.

ALICE. Sylvia, you ought to be ashamed !

SYLVIA. It costs you nothing to say that ; and it makes you feel self-righteous. The shame, for a woman with a soul, is the life that for twenty months I have been leading.

MRS. TEMPLE [nearly tearful]. You graceless child ! Your husband has a right, so long as you

live, to your affection, your condescension, your charity.

SYLVIA. Then, mother, why doesn't your husband get his rights ?

TEMPLE [*soothingly*]. Quite properly said, my child—quite properly said. And now—

MRS. TEMPLE [*enraged*]. Oh !—“ quite properly said ! ” [To SYLVIA] George quite properly calls you a fish !

SYLVIA. I am not anæmic, mother. But I will not make my life an ignominious compromise, like the life of my sister !

ALICE [*pitying herself*]. I have my children.

SYLVIA. You've no right to your children ! You've wronged them !

ALICE. Henry ! How does she dare—how does she dare say that !

SYLVIA. That's half what keeps the world awry ! Half of us—two-thirds of us—come into the world without a voice beforehand—unplanned, uninvited, unhoped for—fruits of a force we are neither strong enough to withstand nor wise enough to refine. There's something beyond exuberance ; there's responsibility. You have no right to perpetuate your disillusionment, your revulsion, your sullen protest, your weak submission, in the lives of innocent children ! As ye sow so shall ye reap !

ALICE [*overthrown*]. Oh ! [To HENRY] Why don't you answer ? Why don't you answer her ?

HENRY. Why is it *you can't* ?

ALICE. Oh ! oh ! oh !

TEMPLE. Now, now—my dear young people, you—

GEORGE [*waving him aside*]. Oh, who wants any children? Who ever said anything about any children? What the devil is it all about?

HENRY [*with equal force*]. That's precisely what it *is* about. In my opinion, there are half a dozen words you can say to your wife, *now*; or you are done for!

GEORGE [*with bravado*]. Oh, you're a handsome oracle! How would you like your wife to hurl that sort of thing at you for a change?

HENRY. Since we're in for a first-class family row, I'll tell you I'd like it—jolly well!

ALICE [*sharing the consternation of her parents*]. Henry! Henry—!

HENRY [*to her*]. Jolly well!

ALICE. Oh, how dare you! What do you mean? How dare you!

MRS. TEMPLE. Alice, this is not your quarrel. This—

ALICE [*to HENRY*]. You—to talk to me—you! Oh!

GEORGE. Oh, you're a happy family altogether! All of you!

HENRY. Whatever we are, we're being a wholesome one. We are saying what we think, to-night.

TEMPLE [*to GEORGE*]. What stamina have you, young man? In the last thirty years I have weathered domestic storms that would sink your little cockleshell.

MRS. TEMPLE [*enraged at this*]. William, *I* will wait—till we are at home——

TEMPLE. You can't! You won't wait till we get outside of this house! [*To the others*] Oh, away with all this! There is only one question here!

GEORGE. And I didn't call you in to settle it, Mr. Temple, but to observe me do so. [*To SYLVIA*] Are you going to receive Sir Hugh Dellamy here again, or are you not?

SYLVIA. I am not. I am going to leave you for ever, George, now.

MRS. TEMPLE [*approaching tears*]. You don't realise, Sylvia—you don't realise——!

GEORGE. Oh, let me have a word now and then, Mrs. Temple! [*To SYLVIA*] Where do you think you are going?

SYLVIA. I'm afraid I can't provide you with a cause for divorce, George.

GEORGE. What's to support you?

SYLVIA. My work.

GEORGE. When did you ever do a stroke of work?

SYLVIA. Twice, when I have insisted upon seeing Sir Hugh.

GEORGE. Doubtless *he'll* look after my wife!

SYLVIA. Not very well-bred of you, George. Father, will you lend me twenty pounds?

TEMPLE. If you leave your husband you needn't expect a penny from me, for the rest of your life. You ought to think of the moral effect of this sort of thing on your young brother!

SYLVIA. I am sorry to say that my brother is

growing up just the kind of man on whom this will have an *immoral* effect.

MRS. TEMPLE. Thankless child ! I shall see that your aunts do not take you in.

ALICE [*now transformed, supporting SYLVIA*]. Take care, mother—Sylvia's going to do it !

GEORGE [*to SYLVIA*]. If you do, and run up bills in my name, I'll publish you !

HENRY [*as SYLVIA ponders her father's refusal*]. Do you realise what time of night it is, Sylvia ?

SYLVIA. No ! Why should I ?

[*She starts for the door.*

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia—where are you going ?

SYLVIA [*indicating her dress*]. To take off my hire !

[*She goes into the house.*

GEORGE [*putting his hands into his pockets*]. And that's how the book ends ! And it ends there because three women out of every four are cats. I'm going to smoke a cigar.

[MRS. TEMPLE *watches him disappear into the dark end of the garden. She starts for the house.*

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia ! Sylvia !

TEMPLE. Stop ! Listen to me ! Sylvia is about to leave this house with two sixpences in her pocket.

ALICE. Father, she won't go to anybody ! She's too proud—she couldn't, she wouldn't, explain all this, to anyone in the world !

TEMPLE. That's what I'm hoping ! Jane, she can't do anything with one shilling. By midnight

she'll be back, and this foolish episode will be over. And then, [grimly] with the fine strategy of her sex——

MRS. TEMPLE. I *won't* let her go ! This man shall not be rid of her ! I will hold her back with my own hands !

[*She rushes for the house, pursued by TEMPLE.*

TEMPLE. Jane ! I tell you—Jane !

MRS. TEMPLE. Let me be, you wretched old man !

[*She hurries in.*

TEMPLE. Jane ! Jane ! Oh, Adam and Eve !
[*He follows her in.*] Jane !

[*GEORGE is for a moment in view at a distance, smoking.* ALICE turns to HENRY with her stored-up rage. HENRY throws himself into a chair with a not ill-natured sigh.

HENRY. It looks as if something were going to happen.

ALICE. Something is ! You dare to speak to me like that in the presence of others ! I'll tell you the truth to-night ! Everything that Sylvia has lived through I have lived through. I have seen one after another of my illusions go by the board. My children have come to me with my joy in each one of them blackened by the certainty that the book does end there. Such women as Sylvia and I suffer at your hands a degradation—a degradation that is horrible ! I have been your wife for seven years, and I tell you, everything that Sylvia has lived through I have lived through ! And it has eaten out my heart !

HENRY [*not unkindly*]. There is one thing you haven't been through.

ALICE. Oh, I challenge you—I challenge you—to tell me what it is !

HENRY. You've never had the candour, you've never had the courage, to stand up to me as Sylvia has stood up to *that* timber-headed oaf, and tell me so ! You've swallowed it ; you've sulked ; you've compromised. And whenever you've wanted from me a display of acquiescence, of good-nature, of mock-adoration, you've relied on your beauty, your sex, to conquer my weakness. And you've succeeded ; and here we are——!

ALICE. Ah, you *want* Sylvia to leave him ! [*Ominously*] So you welcome that sort of thing, do you ?

HENRY. I want any man, woman, or child, if he has a conviction about anything, in the name of Heaven to live up to it or else to hold his tongue ! If Sylvia has the pluck to carry this through on a shilling and to ask charity from no one—then posterity can't blame her if it lacks what makes one generation better than another. And as for what the present generation may think of her, it may go to the devil.

ALICE [*nodding*]. And after I have suffered all this, after I have suffered in silence, doing my Christian duty, consuming my soul——

HENRY. Don't talk like your mother ! Every time you exploit an infirmity don't call it a Christian duty !

ALICE. I say you dare to tell me that another woman in my place ought to leave her husband ! Henry, look at me ! Deny to me that a hundred times—a hundred times, you've been to me nothing less than a brute ! A brute !

HENRY [*shrugging*]. I can't.

ALICE. Ah ! Ah !

HENRY. And in the same spirit you don't make a much better showing than I do. Let me tell you this: when for the time being the balance of magnetism has been settled between a man and a woman, there comes a cool moment when he looks at her face to face. And then the one thing she has to rely on is, not sex, not the brute in us all—but character ; and that becomes truer with every day she puts behind her. Character ! And that's the meaning of Dellamy.

ALICE. Then I'll show you character. I'll show you what Dellamy means !

[TEMPLE *hurries back from the house, mopping his brow*.

TEMPLE. Oh, what a woman !

ALICE. Henry, from this hour on, I never—never again—

TEMPLE [*coming between them with a groan*]. Can't you two keep the peace long enough for me to have a row with her mother ? [He *hurries towards the door*.] Jane ! [He *returns to ALICE*.] I have actually persuaded your mother. [He *hurries again towards the door*.] Jane ! [MRS. TEMPLE *reappears, subdued and long-suffering*. He tries to collect them all.]

I say, George ! Do come here a moment, George ! [GEORGE *slowly joins them.*] Now look here—I assume that if—presently, George—Sylvia shows a disposition to do her part, you'll do yours. [GEORGE *is non-committal.*] Very well ! I am pleased to say that her mother—with that wisdom which occasionally—I mean always, eventually—overtakes her, agrees with me that the one course to take with such an obstinate character as Sylvia's, is to give her her head and let her try to jump over a house. It's going to rain ! Rain—and one shilling. The chances are a thousand to one that she'll come back within an hour !—in tears of repentance.

ALICE [*fiercely*]. Oh, will she !

TEMPLE. A woman bred like Sylvia can't survive without assistance !

MRS. TEMPLE. Unless that dreadful man leaves London to-night I shall gather in my daughter, whether she survives or not !

TEMPLE. Drivel ! [Quickly] I mean, quite so—quite so ! [To GEORGE] At any rate, sooner or later, Sylvia will come back. Suppose it's a week ! Meanwhile, you'll have had a rest. But, George, you will have discovered that married life is something more than you ever dreamt of it. It's an addiction—it's an addiction which fastens itself upon a man, and, like all other addictions, the more it makes him suffer, the surer is its grasp.

MRS. TEMPLE. Hm ! I will add that—

TEMPLE [*in a panic lest she change her mind.*]. You see—Jane has promised to keep silence—

[*sentimentally*] a mother's sacrifice!—and to let Sylvia leave this house without a word. George, when she comes back, will you let her in?

GEORGE [*abstractedly*]. Your wife or mine?

TEMPLE. My daughter, sir!

GEORGE. Yes, I'll take her in.

MRS. TEMPLE [*tearfully*]. Don't be hard on her, George!

GEORGE. You know the terms on which she will come back. They'll be within the law, Mrs. Temple—the good old English law. I stand for the solid traditions of the country, as my old governor did. And the older I grow the more I respect him. He never changed his views about anything from the day he was born. And I don't intend to change mine. She'll find me just as she left me. And she *will* come back—and jolly glad to find this house and seven servants waiting for her!

TEMPLE. And, my dear boy, we shall use all the little means we know—to cause her to do so.

GEORGE [*grimly*]. I have no doubt you will use all the little means.

HENRY. Rather a wet night—on a shilling, George.

GEORGE. So much the better.

TEMPLE. Yes; the weather's turning cold.

[TEMPLE goes to listen at the door. HENRY tries to throw a wrap over ALICE'S shoulders.

ALICE [*tossing off the wrap*]. What do you think she cares about the night?

MRS. TEMPLE. She'll get her feet wet, Alice! It

isn't good for any woman to get her feet wet !
[Appealing] William !

TEMPLE. Sh ! [He comes away from the door.] She's coming down the stairs ! [He gestures for silence.] If you don't want it to be serious, don't treat it so ! Matter of fact—matter of fact !

[TEMPLE and GEORGE and MRS. TEMPLE sit in affected nonchalance. SYLVIA returns. She is dressed in a plain hat and in a cloth morning gown of a fashion two years old.

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia ! What have you on ?

SYLVIA. My property.

MRS. TEMPLE. You look like a shop-girl !

SYLVIA. I may be one to-morrow, mother. Father, will you lend me five pounds ? I have no gloves.

[GEORGE smiles.

TEMPLE. No, Sylvia.

ALICE. I will lend you a hundred pounds !

[There is a general shock, save on the part of HENRY.

SYLVIA. You ? You must be hysterical.

[She moves away.

ALICE [follows her]. Come and see me to-morrow ! [Ominously] I may have something to tell you, then.

SYLVIA [treating her lightly]. No, thanks. George, I shall have been a passing vexation to you. I'm sorry. I have left a few things that are mine. I will send for them.

GEORGE. You won't get 'em, unless you come for 'em—not even if you send Dellamy.

SYLVIA [with a shrug]. "Dellamy"—! O,

George, I would give much if we might not part in anger ! To-night it is just two years since you asked me not to kill you by refusing to marry you. Since you swore before your Maker that after marriage we should be just the same to each other as we were before. You were right, George—we have fought and hurt each other after marriage, just as we fought and hurt each other before. But, Alice, I went into it with a dream of something more spiritual than I had ever known, till then. It was vague then. It isn't vague, now. It's the clearest, sanest, simplest thing in the world. I want my vocation ; I want my children. But that's something more than an instinct, if you please ! It's everything good that's in me, heart, mind, and soul. It means that unless I can have for them every interest and hope and sacrifice that *two* people are capable of, I won't have any children at all. A she-cat will fight for her young, when they exist. That is all most women do. But I am fighting for mine *now*—now, before the die is cast—now, before it's too late. And I will fight to the death for them, *now*, just as I would if they were in my arms ! That's the inspiration *I* have found, beyond where the book ends. And that's the reason George and I are parting, for the rest of our lives.

[She goes in. Then, as her father, from nearest the door, silently nods that she has left the house, the faces of her critics show something like self-questioning.

III

[This is a room in SIR HUGH DELLAMY'S apartment in Mayfair. It is the room where he spends his leisure hours. You see, through a door in the centre of the wall facing you, a stained glass window illuminated from beyond. Its colours pleasantly harmonise with the oaken panelling of the hall and room. The walls are in the sole possession of young children: in paintings, and drawings, and photographs, and modelling. Some of these are replicas of what you have seen in the great national collections, or of what you may not have seen in private collections. Others are original works of considerable promise. But each, of the perhaps dozen examples which the room contains, shows some phase of the grace and innocence of very little people who are just discovering the world. Here, close on your right, an ivory-coloured cast of a boy's head and shoulders stands on a dark pedestal. It is that bust formerly attributed to Donatello, and now to Desiderio da Settignano, but for ever to be attributed to someone who rejoiced in the sight of young children breathing happily the atmosphere of love.

There is no one in the room. The door on your right

leads to SIR HUGH's dressing-room. The one on your left leads into the dining-room. You hear an electric bell, and a manservant comes from the dining-room and disappears into the hall. In a few moments SIR HUGH appears, supporting SYLVIA HERBERT. She is dressed as we last saw her, but her skirt is spattered with mud, and she is pale and weak, and heedless of where she is going. He brings her to an arm-chair, into which she sinks, her head drooping, her eyes closed.

SIR HUGH [*to the MANSERVANT*]. Some sherry.

[In a moment SYLVIA raises her head. She sees the little Donatello boy. She sees DELLAMY hurriedly writing, standing before his desk. Something makes her bury her face in her arms, on the chair-back. The MANSERVANT brings the sherry. SIR HUGH follows him off into the hall and gives him written instructions. A MAIDSERVANT passes, and DELLAMY whispers to her. Then he pours a glass of the sherry.

SIR HUGH [*bending over SYLVIA*]. Sylvia——?

[At his voice she breaks down, and gives way to uncontrollable sobbing. He puts back the glass and draws out her hatpins and takes her hat to the table. With an effort, SYLVIA pulls herself together. She accepts the glass from him. While she drinks DELLAMY thoughtfully paces the room. Now she glances to the walls, whence her eyes must fix on him. There is in her eyes something of the look of a hungry child.

SYLVIA [*faintly*]. Was it chance—that you found me ?

DELLAMY [*after a moment's hesitation*]. Yes. [*She is depressed by this and wilts, striving against more tears. It moves him to qualify.*] Partly. [*This soothes her.*] Sylvia——

SYLVIA [*bravely, seeking self-control*]. Yes, Dellamy ?

DELLAMY. How long since you have had food ?

SYLVIA. Last night.

DELLAMY. Twenty-four hours ?

SYLVIA. Since my last dinner with him.

DELLAMY. Will it have been the last ?

SYLVIA. Ah, yes—yes ! But—[*wretchedly*] my friend, I haven't been magnificent—I haven't been a success ! Not yet.

[*She covers her face.*

DELLAMY [*pouring her more wine*]. You went to Dowd's Hotel and gave your name as Miss Temple.

SYLVIA. You know ?

DELLAMY. You left there very early this morning. I grew hopeless of finding you.

SYLVIA. I couldn't pay for my room—I didn't dare go back. I—I don't know how to find ways of earning money—[*with a sob*] I'm too cowardly to ask for work. Dowd's will have me arrested !

DELLAMY. I arranged that trifle.

SYLVIA. O, Dellamy !

DELLAMY. Why were you looking into the Thames like that ?

SYLVIA. I—I wasn't going to jump in ! I had

decided to slink to one of my aunts—and to beg of her ! But she lives in Portman Square—it was so far, and my knees were so weak ! I looked into the river—where part of my pride had already gone : and the quick death did seem sweeter than the living one. And then—while I was so giddy, so shivering lest someone should speak to me—I heard my name ! I heard your voice ! *your* voice ! I—

[She breaks down again completely.]

DELLAMY *[he stands over her, compassionate].*
Sylvia !—

SYLVIA *[masters herself].* Yes, Dellamy. I won't do this any more. What is it ?

DELLAMY. I have sent for your family—and for your husband.

SYLVIA *[after a shock at this, dully].* I suppose so. *[In a moment she rises.]* I might have expected you to do so, Dellamy.

[With a sudden impulse she goes for her hat.]

DELLAMY. I have ordered tea for you at once and then some supper.

SYLVIA. Thanks ; but I won't stay to see my family ! *[Without putting on her hat, she starts for the door.]* No, no !

DELLAMY *[barring the way].* You may not go, Sylvia.

SYLVIA *[trying to pass].* No—no !

DELLAMY. You may not go.

SYLVIA *[trying to enforce her dignity].* May not ?

DELLAMY. My sister and her husband are living here for the present.

SYLVIA. Your sister ?

DELLAMY. They are dining out, but they won't be late—seeing that I leave England to-morrow.

[*Rings electric bell.*

SYLVIA [*again dully*]. Oh !

DELLAMY. But you must stay until we make your husband and your family understand why I brought you here.

SYLVIA [*thinking of the pictures*]. Then, do these children—express *her* ?

DELLAMY. She's fond of them ; but this is my room.

SYLVIA. Then all these were chosen by you ?

DELLAMY. I've lived so much alone. They always make me feel—sane. Curious of me, isn't it——?

SYLVIA. George Herbert might pass hours in this room—and take no notice of them.

[*The MAID appears.*

DELLAMY. I can't feel wholly absorbed in them myself, while you are here. [To MAID] Will you look after Mrs. Herbert ?

SYLVIA [*looking at her skirt*]. How untidy I am ! [She touches her hair.] Oh ! [She rushes into the hall, after the MAID.] Thank you, Dellamy !

[DELLAMY stands for a moment, thinking of her.

Then he looks at his own muddy garments, and goes into his room.

[THE MANSERVANT shows in JANE TEMPLE AND ALICE

MATTHEWSON. MRS. TEMPLE is outraged and hostile, as well as mournful. ALICE is curious and not downcast. They sit and look about them.

MRS. TEMPLE. She may have been here—ever since last night !

ALICE [*unheeding*]. Mother ! [*Confidentially, indicates the walls.*] All little children !

MRS. TEMPLE [*looking at them*]. These are not theories ; these are doubtless facts. [*Points to pedestal.*] That one looks like its father.

ALICE. But it's a copy of a bust by Donatello—made in the fifteenth century.

MRS. TEMPLE. Donatello was an Italian. Donatello had an affair with a baker's daughter.

ALICE. No ; that was Raphael, mother.

MRS. TEMPLE. If so, that doubtless wasn't Donatello's fault.

[*With determination she starts upon a closer inspection of the room. ALICE also looks again about her. MRS. TEMPLE, at the desk, is twisting her head in the endeavour to read some writing that is upside down.*

ALICE [*much impressed*]. Mother ! [*MRS. TEMPLE guiltily starts, as if some third person had entered the room.*] What is this man ? I have tried to think evil of him, and I can't.

MRS. TEMPLE. Are you going to run off with him, too ?

[*As ALICE continues, MRS. TEMPLE travels until she hears someone on the other side of DELLAMY'S door.*

ALICE. Do you remember that night when Sylvia wanted to know why the book ends there—and when Henry said that *his* romance was in its

bunk with a bottle of salts ? I date a certain change in Henry, from that time on ; and I think it was due to Sir Hugh. Henry began to show a new feeling, not so much for me, but for my girls. All I received was a little more moderation—the kind that makes you feel so uncomfortable—makes you wish they'd break something ! [MRS. TEMPLE, *having come to a stern decision as to who is beyond the door at which she listens, rings the electric bell.*] But last night, mother, Sir Hugh surely influenced Henry again. For while we were left alone in the garden, Henry and I had the most soul-stirring altercation we have ever had. We did take account of stock ! He has been most amiable ever since, though I haven't spoken a word to him, because I don't intend to let his insults pass. But I never slept better in my life than I did last night ! I hadn't begun to ask myself, until this morning, what I want to ask you now : Does Henry's new amiability mean that he has taken a new fancy to his home and his wife ? Or does it mean that he has been misbehaving outside——?

[*The MAID appears.*

MRS. TEMPLE [*who has not heard a word ALICE has spoken, to the MAID.*] You will please conduct me to my daughter.

[*She points sternly to DELLAMY'S room.*

THE MAID [*at first puzzled, then pointing to hall.*] This way, madam.

[MRS. TEMPLE *shows surprise, then doubt ; but she decides to follow the MAID.* ALICE, *going back to*

her thoughts, rouses to the sound of electric bell from the outside door. She smiles, then she assumes a blank expression as the MANSERVANT shows in HENRY MATTHEWSON. ALICE will take no notice of him.

HENRY [good-naturedly]. What? No quorum? [ALICE will not speak to him.] Isn't Sylvia here? [He discovers the pictures.] What a lovely lot of babes! I expected to find your mother on the woolsack and Dellamy in the dock. And the jury, I suppose, [He enjoys her sulking, and sits close beside her on the settee] crowded together on the settee! [After a pause, jocosely.] Let us hang ten innocent men rather than let one guilty one escape! [He looks at her for a moment.] I have discovered something very delightful about you, Alice. Do you want to know? I thought you did! Until to-day it hadn't struck me in the whole course of our married life. It's the extraordinary beauty of your mouth—when in repose.

ALICE [with acerbity]. Then—

[But she shuts her mouth.

HENRY. Your mouth seems to me as if intended by Nature—for an organ of speech! There are certain words which it might utter that would have a living entity for me—I should catch them out of the air and hang them on the walls [again he scans all the walls] for our family motto. Do you want to know what they are?

ALICE. No.

HENRY. Then, like a good husband, I will tell

you. Suppose you suddenly said to me, *now* : "Henry, you brute, I have made up my mind that it is better to have loved and married, than never to have loved at all. Let us begin our life anew ! I accept your apologies for the past, Henry, and, though guiltless myself, I offer you mine ! "

ALICE [*examining him*]. Have you been drinking?

HENRY. Yes ; a thimbleful of benedictine with my coffee. If you like—I'll take a thimbleful every night !

[*She will not respond. HENRY steals a glance at the hall, beckons as if to whisper something important in her ear ; instead, kisses her cheek.*]

ALICE [*turning from him, not wholly displeased*]. Brute !

HENRY. A woman betrayed by her curiosity ! You've a short memory ! I played that trick upon you before we were engaged.

ALICE. You didn't !

HENRY. Before we were engaged ten seconds.

ALICE. Hm ! there's a difference.

HENRY [*sincerely*]. But can't we forget the difference ?

[*As the MAID shows in WILLIAM TEMPLE, HENRY kisses ALICE again.*]

ALICE [*embarrassed by the MAID'S presence*]. Beast ! [*As the MAID disappeared*] People will think we are not married !

TEMPLE [*solemnly*]. Is this a time for trivialities ? Henry, tell me the worst. It can't add anything to my woes to-night !

HENRY. I don't see how the row can begin until mother-in-law arrives.

ALICE. Mother is in another room with Sylvia.

TEMPLE. And these are Sir Hugh's apartments ; and he has the effrontery to telephone me through his manservant that—

HENRY. I don't see the effrontery, you know. There's evidently no kind of concealment going on.

TEMPLE. Then there ought to be ! Why is my daughter here ? I have been the last to harbour any misgivings like this ! [DELLAMY *has changed his clothes ; he comes from his room.*] But now, what must I—?

DELLAMY. Good evening, Mr. Temple. [To the others] Good evening. I wonder if you know that I am sharing this place with my sister and her husband ? They will be back presently.

TEMPLE. Why and when, sir, did my daughter come here ?

DELLAMY. I brought her here just now. I found her standing on Westminster Bridge at half-past nine. She had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. She was on her way to Portman Square, to her aunt ; but having no money and little strength—

TEMPLE. Why didn't you deliver her to her aunt, instead of bringing her here ?

DELLAMY. May I explain that to her husband when he comes ?

TEMPLE. He may refuse to come. He may prefer to send his solicitors.

DELLAMY. Then, in my opinion, Mr. Temple, he'll lose his wife.

ALICE. But if George comes, you think she'll go back to him ?

DELLAMY. I should think that might possibly still depend on him.

TEMPLE. Sir Hugh, last night you implied that her affairs were not your affair. To-night I find you, not departed for America, but in London—and my daughter in your apartments. It makes me believe that you influence her, and against her husband. Such conduct is uncivilised ; and if you deny a personal interest in her, that makes you the more devilish.

[DELLAMY ponders a moment.

DELLAMY. A personal interest ? Surely, I declare one.

[He quietly indicates the hall. SYLVIA returns, her hair arranged and her skirt brushed, but pale and weak, followed by her mother, distressed and abused. DELLAMY draws a chair for SYLVIA to a table. The MAID fetches tea and toast.

DELLAMY begins to pour the tea.

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia refuses to converse with me about anything until she has taken food. You are going to accept food from Sir Hugh ?

[SYLVIA begins to eat.

DELLAMY. Surely, Mrs. Temple ! [To SYLVIA] You used to take one lump, I think ?

[SYLVIA nods.

TEMPLE. Sir Hugh wishes to impress us with the fact that last night we refused you hospitality

if you left your husband's roof. I may only say that certainly we did not dream—

MRS. TEMPLE. *You* did not dream—

TEMPLE. And you agreed with me.

MRS. TEMPLE. I yielded to you against my will. I have never done it in my life without regret.

TEMPLE. We will discuss that at another time—probably for the rest of time. [To DELLAMY] I did not dream that my daughter would be so hard-hearted as to subject her entire family to what with every minute—every crumb [to SYLVIA] you accept there, takes on the dimensions of a scandal. [*She slowly eats, without seeming to heed.*] Very well! Since you force it on us, I offer you domicile; and I request you to return home with us at once!

MRS. TEMPLE. Your father is trying to say that he offers you a shelter as a loving duty, regardless of George.

TEMPLE. Very well, I do! And I insist that at once you—

MRS. TEMPLE. Your father does not insist. He recognises that it is no man's place to insist to any woman. That sort of thing is out of date.

[All turn to her, astonished.]

TEMPLE. Good Heaven! Very well! But now, having sufficiently lowered your self-respect by—

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia, that is all your father has to say. There is a cab at the door. Can you say something, now?

SYLVIA [puts down her cup, ponders, raises it

again, as the electric bell is heard. She puts down her cup, fearfully. To SIR HUGH]. What is that ?

DELLAMY. I fancy it's your husband.

SYLVIA [half hysterically, appealing]. Henry !

[She rises.

DELLAMY. I assure you there's no cause for agitation.

THE MANSERVANT [announcing]. Mr. Herbert.

[GEORGE HERBERT coldly surveys the others.

DELLAMY. Good evening, Mr. Herbert. Will you sit down ?

GEORGE. No, thank you. I came here because I fancy you have a formal announcement to make, Sir Hugh.

DELLAMY. I wished to avoid any misunderstanding on your part as to why Mrs. Herbert is here.

TEMPLE. Sir Hugh wishes to explain why, knowing that Sylvia wanted to go to her Aunt Dorothy, he brought her to Brook Street.

GEORGE. There can be no misunderstanding. My house was open to my wife.

DELLAMY. But was your heart, Mr. Herbert ?

GEORGE. Yours was ?

DELLAMY. Of course. Mrs. Herbert decided to go to her aunt because there was no more congenial place open to her. If she now decides to return to you, no one will know anything about this episode but yourself and her family, and— [pointing to himself] one old and reliable friend.

HENRY. That's reasonable.

GEORGE. You said you were going to America to-day.

DELLAMY. After what I heard at your house last night, I had too lively an intuition as to what would happen to Mrs. Herbert to-day, at a time when you said she could not look to you for the good-will of a friend.

TEMPLE. You knew her programme was impossible, and so did we. But for you she would have reached her aunt, who has told us she would refuse her anything but her cab-fare to the house of her husband. The only solution within propriety has been postponed by a person outside the family.

DELLAMY. To any serious extent, Mr. Temple, if Mrs. Herbert now wishes to return to her husband ? Suppose I leave you for a while——?

SYLVIA [*with quick entreaty*]. No !

[GEORGE, who has shown some disposition to soften a little, stiffens.

MRS. TEMPLE. Then, Sylvia, I bid you tell me what suggestion Sir Hugh has made to you about your future.

SYLVIA. Yes, mother. He has made none.

ALICE [*pleading for a reconciliation*]. George !

HENRY. Look here, George, why can't you be friendly with Sylvia ? Hang it all, she's a reasonable person !

GEORGE [*shortly*]. I came here to hear what Sir Hugh has to say.

MRS. TEMPLE. George—we admit that *we* acted unkindly—unwisely. Why can't you ?

GEORGE. Because I don't! What do you care about *my* convenience? I have offered your daughter the standard article of an English domestic life.

HENRY. I protest!

GEORGE. *You* protest! I know what your married life is. I am the only normal person in this room to-night. I take a settled view of things—things as they always have been, and as they always ought to be. And it's the view upheld by society, and the law, and the Church. I'm not to be henpecked by a woman, nor led astray by a man with a lot of destructive ideas. I know what I want, and I say what I want; and I'll have what I want, or know the reason why. It's the men like me who hold the Empire together.

HENRY. Oh, go back and live in the twelfth century! You had better hold your marriage together to-night. Take on the Empire in the morning.

GEORGE [*hotly*]. Your sister-in-law can come back to my house on the terms that were offered her last night. But she'll have to move jolly quick if she wants to find me there! [To SYLVIA] You'll have to whip out of here, my dear lady, well inside of three minutes.

[SYLVIA, *without a look at him, takes up a bit of toast.*

DELLAMY. With your permission, may I ask what provision you are willing to make for her if she follows her right—I believe it is her legal right—to decline?

GEORGE. You may. None whatever. I am under no compulsion to.

ALICE [*warmly*]. Oh ! Henry has never spoken of me in such a tone since I knew him !

TEMPLE. There never was a time when, if my wife insisted upon leaving me, I would not make some provision for her !

GEORGE. I don't blame you.

DELLAMY. With your permission, may I ask if, in case Mrs. Herbert declines, you will find a way to divorce her on the easiest terms the law affords ?

GEORGE. For whose convenience ?

DELLAMY. For her own.

GEORGE. No, sir, I shall not be willing. You may count on that. Why should I be ? When you ask that question you are thinking of yourself.

DELLAMY. Better ! I'm thinking about this lady, who was my friend—I think—before you knew her.

GEORGE. Doubtless ! Sylvia, I'm not going to bandy words with you. Will you give this up—chuck this academic rot—and come home and act like a God-fearing English gentlewoman—now ?

SYLVIA [*distinctly, quietly*]. If you please, George, I should like never to see you again.

GEORGE [*apoplectic*]. You—you stick to that ?

SYLVIA. I say it without anger.

GEORGE. Then, by God ! I'm done !

MRS. TEMPLE and TEMPLE. George !

GEORGE [*turning on them*]. Done ! [To SYLVIA]

I'll smash as many dining-room chairs as suits me—I've never been violent to *you*. Every word of the law lies on my side. But as to any future woman, if you count on that, I'll get along *without* the law—I can't do worse than I've done with it ! Ten years from now you'll be getting old, my friend—and your situation will be the same as it is to-night : If you want to lead a decent life, the single chance you'll have is to apply at my door, and take what I allow you. And mind you come back clean !

[*He leaves the room without a look behind him. A silence follows.*

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia, what will you have driven him to—!

HENRY. Why, he's gone out to hold up the Empire !

TEMPLE [*to DELLAMY, trembling*]. Now, sir, say to me this : that no matter how unhappily detached my daughter may remain, from you she may expect nothing.

SYLVIA [*with distress*]. What has Sir Hugh to do with it ?

DELLAMY. Mr. Temple, surely there's a long distance between nothing—and what you force me to think you imply.

TEMPLE. That, sir, does not *answer* my implication.

DELLAMY [*to SYLVIA*]. They fear for the effect of this upon your character. Have I in any way encouraged you towards this step ?

SYLVIA. No, Dellamy.

DELLAMY. Then how will this affect those moral tenets which they feel are now in jeopardy ? What are your beliefs ? What are your expectations ? [She is silent.] Wouldn't it be an excellent plan for you to state them ? [Urging] In justice to your parents ?

SYLVIA [*after a moment*]. "Moral tenets !" What are anyone's moral tenets but the wish to be happy and to remain so ?

MRS. TEMPLE. Oh ! I knew it would come to this ! I knew it, William !

SYLVIA. Oh, I remember so well what Dellamy said to me, years ago : "Most people can't believe what they see—they can only believe what they hear." [To her father] Can't you see that a woman's virtues are a woman's nature ? Men didn't invent them, mother—with all the fuss men make over the institutions men think they are setting up for ever. Institutions ! *We* are the only institution ; we haven't changed since the world began. [To HENRY] But you make new laws and new religions every century ; and we toddle along after you as best we can ; because it pleases you—and that pleases us. [Strongly] But you've got to respect what we are for !

HENRY. Don't heave it all at me, Sylvy.

SYLVIA. And life with George Herbert has made me ask what I am for. Perhaps I should never have thought about it, if I had been happy. I should have been quite shocked at Dellamy,

perhaps. When happy a woman nearly always *is* a fool. But what *am I* for? What can I do that some man can't do, and do better?

TEMPLE [*blankly*]. I don't know!

SYLVIA. It has taken me twenty-six years to discover. And the one thing there is: *that I can't do*—without being happy; and without being understood and abetted by some man.

MRS. TEMPLE. I don't know what you are talking about so shamelessly.

SYLVIA. About my children, mother—the one compensation I might have for growing old. If you ask for my belief, *they* are my belief! And if any strong woman thinks she has a better belief—I pity her just a little more than I pity myself.

TEMPLE [*with difficulty*]. But—but—George—George—might—I mean—a—children—happen!

SYLVIA [*strongly*]. They shouldn't "happen"! You "happened," father; mother "happened"; Alice "happened," I "happened."

HENRY [*supporting her*]. I "happened."

SYLVIA [*turning to him*]. And that's what makes this scene so hideous to-night.

HENRY [*meekly taking it to himself*]. Thanks, old Sylvy!

SYLVIA. Oh, dear, you aren't half as bad as Alice paints you.

ALICE. He is!

SYLVIA [*to ALICE*]. If you'd had any snap you'd have whipped *him* into *something* long ago.

HENRY. You haven't seen Alice perform!

ALICE. Leave Henry alone, Sylvia.

TEMPLE [again]. But—but, I never heard George urge any serious objections to a family.

HENRY [exploding]. Damn it ! that isn't what Sylvia's talking about ! She wants the inspiration—the sympathy, the enthusiasm, the recognition that the *biggest* job in life belongs to her ! [SYLVIA turns to him in amazement, then half in tears.] And without the *right* inspiration Sylvia—declines to *play* ! Who wants to lead an orchestra of one penny whistle ? George !—Did you ever hear of a navvy urging serious objections to shouldering a sack of corn ? No ! he takes it as part of the day's work ; but he doesn't burst into poetry about it. George—is a hulking navvy—leaning up against the Empire.

ALICE [examining him]. May I ask what you are ?

HENRY. I'm a daddy. I have three charming daughters, who all look like their mother. I ask for nothing more—in the way of daughters.

[MRS. TEMPLE crosses the room to SYLVIA.

MRS. TEMPLE [sternly]. So ! If those are your beliefs, may I ask what your expectations are ?

SYLVIA [breaking down]. Nothing ! I wish I were dead !

[She sobs.

ALICE [hurrying to her, tearfully]. Sylvia !

MRS. TEMPLE [likewise inclined to tears]. See, sir, what you have brought my daughter to !

DELLAMY. Not I, Mrs. Temple. If it were anything but her own convictions, I should not admire

her as I do. But I knew, years ago, that some day she would be capable of speaking as she has.

SYLVIA. Why didn't I know ! Why wasn't I taught ! I asked Dellamy why the book ends there—and he *wouldn't*—

[She cannot go on.]

ALICE [compassionately]. Sylvy !

TEMPLE. And I tell you all this is froth—froth on the waters of darkness. [To DELLAMY] You as much as confess your intervention ; and when I ask you the concrete question which marks her future, if she is to remain of good repute, you can't answer it !

ALICE. Sir Hugh, George won't divorce her. You don't know him ; he won't divorce her.

HENRY. But why keep dragging Sir Hugh into it !

DELLAMY [answering TEMPLE]. May I answer it ? Since I seem an object of apprehension, although without the least indication from your daughter that I should be so.

MRS. TEMPLE. William, he *cannot* answer it.

DELLAMY. Then suppose I prove I can't. I don't suppose there is anyone here who wouldn't choose so courageous and beautiful a mother as your daughter might be, rather than "happen" into this world ?

MRS. TEMPLE [horrified]. William !

[TEMPLE motions her to be silent.]

DELLAMY. Mrs. Herbert, the world offers you three alternatives : submission to your husband—you have heard the terms—or a life of arid detach-

ment while you wait, perhaps till you die, for your release, which he withholds. Or else—some new relation which ignores the marriage bond.

MRS. TEMPLE [*jumping up*]. William !

DELLAMY [*to SYLVIA*]. They fear for you, I understand, this third alternative.

MRS. TEMPLE. William, this is the first time in my life that I have ever heard a man *hint* at a third alternative !

TEMPLE. I have no doubt of it. Please stop “William”-ing, and allow Sir Hugh to entangle himself in his own sophistry.

DELLAMY. Consider for a moment this third alternative—

TEMPLE. There *is* no third alternative. It is for women to do their duty, sir—or to die—like the heroines they generally are.

MRS. TEMPLE. And one never sees a *man* so heroic as when he’s telling them so.

ALICE [*jumping up, strongly*]. Father ! There *is* a third alternative !

MRS. TEMPLE [*aghast*]. Alice !

HENRY [*likewise*]. Mother ! There *is* a third alternative !

DELLAMY. Then let us prove the case against the third alternative—undertaken with a man who should do his utmost to make it liveable. Suppose at the outset he settled upon her half of an ample fortune.

TEMPLE. Purchase, sir—rank purchase !

DELLAMY. For cash. Under matrimony the

system is usually the instalment plan. Suppose for the rest of his years he devoted himself to a domestic life with her and her children——

TEMPLE. Then tell me what would be her hold on such a man ?

DELLAMY. Precisely. I don't see that your daughter would have *any* more hold on such a man than if she were married to him. Though he, having done much more than a husband is expected to, still would be as free to maltreat her and to desert her, as if she were legally his wife. And she could no more recover his affection by a legal process than if she were licensed to him. And as to damages, she, already owning half his fortune, wouldn't be allowed a farthing, by any twelve tinsmiths in England. The law, Mr. Temple, in the matter of women's relations to men, is as impotent in the cases where they are *not* married to each other, as in the cases where they are.

[SYLVIA steals an enquiring look at him.

TEMPLE. Hm !—society is not impotent in such cases !

DELLAMY. Society deals with them. [To SYLVIA] If you choose the third alternative, then perhaps for the rest of your life the only women who will call on you will be your friends. And that is more than most women can bear. And society will call your children "natural"—and I hope they will be.

MRS. TEMPLE. Isn't this appalling, William !

TEMPLE. And what will be the happiness, the peace of such a woman ?

DELLAMY. Nothing but this ? Once your daughter asked me why the book ends there—what there is beyond, better, more enduring, than the mere untaught exuberance we call romantic love. She has answered that herself now. With the best of fortune, the only happiness she might receive from the third alternative would be : what money can buy, what a man's lifelong love may be valued at, and what a woman's children are to her bosom. But what are those—without the privilege of dining at the best houses in London ?

TEMPLE. And what does the world say to a man who spreads this devilish mirage before a wretched woman's eyes ?

DELLAMY. The world suspects him at once ; it tells him this : " You're a bit overdoing it, old chap ! Of course your principles are most poetic ! But there's an over-supply of women—sent by Heaven. And the uses of one woman are common to them all. Your solicitude for this particular woman is admirable—it's exalted ! And you'd better chuck it, before it gets you into difficulties."

TEMPLE [*impetuously*]. And, sir, to *point* your moral, let me disclose to you that, thirty years ago, *that* is precisely what I did ! [At this no one dares to look at MRS. TEMPLE, who slowly turns her gaze on him. He shows misgivings. He defends himself to her.] I played the game !

MRS. TEMPLE. It seems you did, William. And I do not think it has ever been regretted—by the other woman.

[*A painful silence follows, until at last HENRY scans the ceiling.*

HENRY [*clears his throat*]. It looked like rain when I came in.

[*ALICE turns a look on him. DELLAMY resumes.*

DELLAMY. Well, what's to become of your daughter? Her case is a special case and a hard case. It isn't mentioned in the Prayer Book, nor in the Common Law, nor in the Companies Winding-up Act! Good law does not profess to be just to hard cases. The law in this matter is made for average men and women; and so it has always been ignored by many who are below the average, and by some of the few that are far above it. I think her husband eventually will divorce her, for his own convenience; but—

TEMPLE. Then, why can't she wait?

DELLAMY. She is waiting. But her youth is her capital; and to give her no choice but to wait is to confiscate her capital. She wants to earn an independent living. Her value, in the labour market, is about fifteen shillings a week.

SYLVIA. I can live on that—can't I—?

DELLAMY. You'd better eat all the cake you can to-night. Fifteen pieces of silver! And what another value your daughter would express for me, Mrs. Temple, *if I loved her!* All that a man can find in a woman, and all that a nation may profit by her physical perfection and her great courage [*SYLVIA shakes her head*] and her splendid aspirations. If I *loved* her, Mr. Temple, I should

say to her, now : " If there's a place for me in your heart, don't wait. Share my wealth. Let my ferocity stand off the world. Live your destiny, in the peace of my house, in the hope and joy of my soul, now, in the golden minutes of your youth. And if we are to be judged for that, let it be by those who have loved as truly and as deeply, and with as full a sense of our account with posterity, as we shall have loved." *If I loved your daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Temple, that is what I should say to her. [He fixes his eyes first on SYLVIA's mother, then on her father. SYLVIA's head sinks wretchedly.]* I do love her, Mr. Temple, and that is what I do say to her.

[SYLVIA's head rises, and her eyes fix on space. Her mother rushes to her.

MRS. TEMPLE. Sylvia ! Sylvia—come home——!

TEMPLE. Not one step until she has answered him.

[To DELLAMY] This is what you summoned us for ?

MRS. TEMPLE. How dare you presume on my daughter's state to-night ? You dare not wait her sober judgment.

TEMPLE. " Sober judgment ? " Let her answer him now ! He shall see what blood runs in her veins !

DELLAMY. I insist upon her sober judgment. I will take no kind of acceptance of my proposal to-night. In a few minutes I shall have left London, and to-morrow I shall sail for New York. [To SYLVIA] While I'm away, you might find it grateful to stay in these quarters and make the acquaintance of

my sister. I think it will be your best chance to recover the balance of your nerves. It will commit you to nothing, and you will be most affectionately cared for by one who understands me and believes in me.

MRS. TEMPLE. William ! Sir Hugh, my daughter declines !

DELLAMY. And I promise you this, Mrs. Temple, until I return, three months from to-night, I will have no communication with your daughter whatsoever. And I promise you, if then, when I have repeated what I have said to-night, she does not come to me at once, without any reservation, I will never broach the subject again. I will not take her by assault ; she shall have listened to all that you can say to her—that's for my peace as well as hers.

[*He goes into his room. SYLVIA sits erect, her eyes on space.*

TEMPLE. And you do not rise ? You do not speak ? Do you not see that silence is equivalent to consent—to everything ?

SYLVIA. No ; I do not see so, father.

MRS. TEMPLE [*tearfully*]. No, dear—no ! Alice, why have you not spoken ? Why have *you* not uttered a word ?

[*ALICE and HENRY are motionless, neither looking at the other.*

TEMPLE. Alice, is she not your sister ? Have you nothing to say to her ?

MRS. TEMPLE [*insisting*]. Alice !

ALICE [*with difficulty*]. Henry will not have me say what you wish.

MRS. TEMPLE. Henry !

HENRY. Of course not. I want Alice to express what *she* wishes.

ALICE [*with difficulty*]. I have not spoken to Henry ; I have not looked at him. But I know what he thinks. And I wish to say that on this matter—I agree with Henry.

HENRY [*delighted*]. Go on, old pal !

ALICE. Henry—Henry and I think——

HENRY. We do !

ALICE. *We* think that two people who haven't—haven't made any better showing than we two have made—up to to-night——

HENRY. We do !

ALICE. We think that *we* two had better leave *other* people's affairs alone.

HENRY. We do. *But*—go on, angel !

ALICE. But—if we are forced to express an opinion, then we think—that if I were in Sylvia's position, I should be justified in doing precisely what she has done.

HENRY. While I went out and—held up the Empire !

ALICE [*turning on HENRY*]. And don't make any mistake—I would do it !

HENRY [*to MRS. TEMPLE, with devout admiration*]. I believe she gets it from her mother !

MRS. TEMPLE. Oh, you insufferable man—undermining my daughter's character !

ALICE. Please let Henry be, mother ! [Tearfully to HENRY] I—I want to go home !

TEMPLE. And leave your sister to her fate ! These are my children. For thirty years of my labour, my self-sacrificing, Christian labour, this——

MRS. TEMPLE. Oh, you self-righteous man ! You prayed and prayed that both of these might be boys.

TEMPLE. And what did you give me, when at last it was a boy ?

MRS. TEMPLE. I gave you a good boy, you wretched man !

[HENRY and ALICE show annoyance at the scene.

TEMPLE. Did you ? I'll tell you why my temper is beyond control to-night. The day Sylvia left our house, I backed your son to the sum of two thousand pounds. To-night I faced him down. He has squandered every penny of it, on worse than folly ! That's your boy ! A mockery of the prayers I sent to Heaven for him ! [To SYLVIA] "Posterity"—you make a religion of posterity ? That's how posterity may serve you !

[DELLAMY returns, busy with his preparations.

SYLVIA. I'm sorry for you to-night, father !

TEMPLE. Then come home with us. Are you going to live with this man or are you not ?

[SYLVIA betrays nothing in answer.

DELLAMY. That question won't be fair until three months from now.

HENRY. And, hang it, sir, these things get fixed up with Mrs. Grundy somehow !

TEMPLE [*waving them aside*]. She does not answer. And that means consent ! Go, my girl, and see what it is to live up to an ideal which flaunts itself in the face of all the Christian world ! [To MRS. TEMPLE] Come home !

MRS. TEMPLE. No ! [*She clings to her daughter.*] Sylvia——?

TEMPLE [*towering*]. Jane, I command you to come home !

MRS. TEMPLE [*obeying*]. You wicked old man—your sins are on your head !

TEMPLE. Tell me about it—for the rest of my life !

[*They go.*

ALICE [*after a moment, painfully*]. I wish father and mother *wouldn't* !

HENRY. He's come rather a cropper in the City to-day.

DELLAMY. Not Temple and Woodward ?

HENRY. Yes ; I'm going to help.

DELLAMY. Keep me informed by wireless—the “Mauretania.” Count on me substantially, if he'll allow me.

[HENRY grasps DELLAMY'S hand. *They turn to look at SYLVIA, who stands, still an enigma, deep in thought. ALICE goes to her, and the two silently embrace, without meeting each other's eyes. ALICE goes towards the door, her handkerchief to her eyes.*

SYLVIA. Henry—I'm sorry for the unkind things I've said to you.

HENRY [*he squeezes her hand*]. Sylvia—if—if you'll come down for a week-end, I'll give you a beautiful bull-pup ! Next to the companionship of a man, I think the society of a dog——

ALICE. Come along, silly !

[ALICE and HENRY depart. SYLVIA and DELLAMY are left alone. *A new constraint seizes upon them.*
The MANSERVANT appears.

THE MANSERVANT. The lady's supper is served, sir.

DELLAMY. Good night, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. Not yet ! [*She tries several times to speak, not meeting his eyes.*] Oh ! I wonder if you are the strongest man in the world ! Or—[*she shakes her head*] only the wisest ?

DELLAMY. I suppose I'm not so wise, dear woman, but that you can reduce me to absurdity ; nor so strong but that you can very often have your will with me.

SYLVIA [*after a moment*]. If I were sure of that——!

DELLAMY. After seven years ?

SYLVIA [*wretchedly*]. I mean—if I were not so sure of it ! Because then—then you'd find a way to make me sure of it ! Oh, my God ! for something to blot out the memory of *him—him* ! And so long as I live, I cannot, though I dwell in Paradise ! What am I *now*—what *can* I be now, that can come within a thousand miles of what you've made me think I'm worth to you ! No, no—I'm not ! You *don't* think so—you *can't* think so !

DELLAMY. If you love me as I love you—we shall not stop at that. If you love me, Sylvia,

you never *will* be sure, more than from day to day, how much I love you. I suppose it's ordained that way—[he smiles] to keep you in order.

SYLVIA. And if I ever love you, you never will love me as I love you—you never can. Why did you give them that promise? Why did you do them so much justice? If I love you, there will be no room for justice in my heart!

DELLAMY. My promise was justice for all of us. All justice is for all of us. My train leaves. Good night, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. Where are you going?

DELLAMY. I'm going from London to London, by way of New York. I'm on my way—here! Good night!

SYLVIA. Not yet. [He demurs.] Not yet—! [She approaches him, but he will not move to meet her.]

DELLAMY. Sylvia, perhaps this will have been our sacrament—that I went, knowing that at this moment I could have taken you in my arms, to the end of the world.

SYLVIA [with abandon]. Oh, then—then—

[Her eyes beseech him to.

DELLAMY. And could have let you consider afterwards, instead of now, whether you ever would regret it.

SYLVIA. You doubt!—You doubt *yourself*!

DELLAMY [with a sigh]. Ah!—it will not be I who will doubt—three months from now. Good night, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. Not yet.

DELLAMY. Yes.

SYLVIA. But, Hugh—not on the sea ! The sea is so cruel ! The sea is so like the world !

DELLAMY. I have ridden the sea, and I have ridden the world. Good night.

SYLVIA [*tearfully*]. Hugh ! Hugh ! Ah, don't go ! Don't go ! I can't——

DELLAMY. I promised. God knows I wish I had not promised ! But I did.

SYLVIA. I can't bear to let you go ! I can't live these three months without you ! Hugh, take me with you—now ! Now !

[*She puts her hands upon his shoulders, but he will not embrace her.*

DELLAMY. I promised. O, my sweet Sylvia, how many women have said "Yes" to-night, who will say "No" to-morrow !

[*He shakes his head.*

SYLVIA. Then, oh dear fool, why—why don't you take me with you now ?

DELLAMY. Because I promised. And because I love you. [*He gently takes her hands from his shoulders.*] God keep you, Sylvia !

[*She listens until she hears him close the outer door. Then heavy loneliness descends upon her.*

[*But on the pedestal Donatello's little boy is looking straight into her eyes. It draws her across the space. It makes her take its head in her tremulous fingers. The lips that move are SYLVIA's ; but who knows what voice speaks out of the future ?*

SYLVIA. What shall I do ? What shall I do——?

THE MARRIED WOMAN

A PLAY in Three Acts by C. B. FERNALD. First played at the Aldwych Theatre, London, by The Incorporated Stage Society, June 11, 1911.

Mrs. Temple	Mrs. A. B. TAPPING
Alice Matthewson	MISS NANNIE BENNETT
William Temple	A. S. HOMEWOOD
George Herbert	HUBERT HARBEN
Henry Matthewson	FREDERICK LLOYD
Sylvia Temple	MISS GRACE CROFT
Maidservant at William Temple's	MISS ANNE GASTON
Hugh Dellamy	NORMAN TREVOR
Footman at George Her- bert's	A. E. FILMER
Manservant at Hugh Del- lamy's	C. HERBERT HEWETSON
Maidservant at Hugh Del- lamy's	MISS MABEL ADAIR

The play produced by KENELM Foss.

- Act I. At William Temple's—two years ago.
- Act II. At George Herbert's—last night.
- Act III. At Hugh Dellamy's—to-night.

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